

Entangled Histories of the Balkans

*Volume Three:
Shared Pasts,
Disputed Legacies*

Edited by Roumen Daskalov
& Alexander Vezenkov



Entangled Histories of the Balkans

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Notes on Transliteration

In this collective volume, we use several different systems to transliterate Cyrillic scripts. For Macedonian and Serbian, we follow the commonly accepted Latin transliteration of these languages, which involves the usage of special characters with diacritics (such as *č*, *š* and *ž* for the Cyrillic letters *ч*, *ш* and *ж* respectively). In Serbian, which is officially written both in Cyrillic and in Latin, the principles of transliteration are very strict. In Macedonian, there is room for some hesitation, for instance about the letters *ќ* and *ѓ*. We adopted for them the digraphs *kj* and *gj*, instead of *ć* and *đ*, which are often used but reflect Serbian rather than Macedonian pronunciation.

However, the system with diacritics is not typical of the Latinization of Bulgarian and Russian scripts. For them we use English-derived digraphs (*ch* for *ч*, *sh* for *ш*, *zh* for *ж* and *ts* for *ц*). The *y* stands for the *ѣ* in Bulgarian and in Russian, but also for the *ѣ* in Russian Cyrillic: a small inconvenience triggered by our preference for a more practical “English” transliteration. Accordingly, the *ю* and *я* are transliterated as *yu* and *ya*. The Russian soft sign (*ь*) is denoted with an apostrophe (*'*). This system seems to be the most popular one for these languages and, at least in Bulgaria, it is currently favored by law. However, as the same system does not distinguish between the vowel *a* and the *schwa* (*ə*), we use the character *ǎ* for the latter (namely, for what is *ѡ* in the Bulgarian Cyrillic).

The principles of Latin transliteration of the Greek script are also far from obvious. We abandoned both the classicist transliteration in an Ancient Greek manner (for instance, *η* Latinized as *e*) and the hypertrophic imitation of the modern Greek phonetics (with, for instance, the digraph *dh* for *δ*). We tried to follow a middle road. For instance, *η* is transliterated as *i*, but the ancient diphthongs *αι*, *ει* and *οι* are denoted by *ai*, *ei* and *oi*. Although this does not reflect the modern pronunciation, it makes possible some visual recognition of the Greek form, which would otherwise be difficult with the introduction of *e*, *i* and *i* respectively.

Of course, we have retained the spelling of well-known geographical names (such as *Sofia* instead of “Sofiya”).

Notes on Contributors

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Introduction

Roumen Daskalov and Alexander Vezenkov

The present volume is a continuation of a series of studies on the shared, connected and entangled history of the Balkans. It explores the appropriation of the past (ancient, medieval, modern) and of imperial historical legacies in particular by the historiographies of the modern nation-states. Nation-states in the Balkans emerged as a result of secession from empires in Southeastern Europe, especially from the Ottoman Empire, in the course of the nineteenth century and, to a lesser extent, the twentieth century. History here, as elsewhere, was a preferred resource for nation-building, from “Romantic” amateur historians to professional “scientific” historiographies. In the search for origins and in order to forge collective identities through history, the newly emerged nations needed a past exclusively their own. Ethnonyms, origins, ethnogenesis and political formations under the ethnic name became extremely important in the process of sorting out one’s own past and disentangling it from that of the others. Yet the past itself—ancient and medieval—presents a quite different and rather “messy” picture: wandering barbarian tribes, ethnically mixed empires and similar feudal “states” with ever-changing territories and borders. In order to fit the national(-ist) expectations of pure ethnies (or a mixture of desirable components) with clear-cut ethnic boundaries and territorial continuity, the past had to be recast and re-signified. In the process historians of neighboring peoples fought over common legacies to carve out a share for their nations or disavow some undesirable aspects.

Balkan historiographies are still predominantly traditionalist and nationalist, and their narratives are largely self-sufficient, ignoring neighboring nations and their respective historiographical schools, except where national claims clash. At the same time they tell more or less the same story with different actors—a long and illustrious history with remarkable continuity starting from ancient times; the deeds of a unique people who demonstrated an immense capacity to survive in difficult circumstances and in endless struggles with enemies; a people who, even after falling under brutal domination and suffering horrible losses in lives and territories, managed to resurrect themselves again and again.

The narrative concentrates on the territory of the present-day nation-state not only for the centuries under foreign rule but even concerning studies on antiquity and prehistory. This is signaled by sections such as “Bulgarian (Romanian, Albanian, etc.) lands in ancient times” and, for a certain period, even the lands (or peoples) of Yugoslavia “since earliest times.” At the same

time, historical studies always pay more attention to disputed areas; thus Macedonia, Kosovo, Dobrudja, Transylvania or Epirus receive more attention than regions recognized as integral part of one country or another. In such cases usually all “parties” feel the need to defend their “historical rights.” Bulgarians and Romanians do not seem happy enough with their parts of Dobrudja, though when the present border was first drawn in 1878, the territory was inhabited by a majority of Muslims and Turks. Greeks lost their “East” in Asia Minor and the Turks in their turn mourn “our Rumelia.” In the case of Macedonia, it is hard to make a complete list of the conflicting claims, all of them backed up by the respective historiography. The nineteenth- and twentieth-century conflicts for domination in these regions were projected onto the past. Medieval studies were the leading branch in history-writing until the mid-twentieth century, and historians contributed to the heated political debates in their own way. For instance, claims from the time of the Balkan Wars were substantiated with research on the Middle Ages. The publication of Byzantine and Ottoman sources served not only as a collection of primary material but also to “prove” ethnic domination over a certain region, the ethnic belonging of a specific population, and so on.

There is a remarkable continuity in history-writing even in communist countries. Initially communist historiography tried to break with the existing tradition of “bourgeois” and “chauvinistic” history-writing and attempted to put economic development and class struggle at the center of analysis as well as to avoid nationalist rhetoric. But this was done in a rather superficial way, and official communist historiography continued to deal primarily with political history. It gradually became more and more nationalist and, in fact, was grafted upon the national narrative. Attempts to overcome mutual prejudices and even to write “common” schoolbooks after 1989 were met with suspicion and did not change much in the grand narrative, while academic publications followed the established lines and abandoned only certain clichés from the communist period. In general, the institutionalized production of national history survived the major political turns of the twentieth century.

The first and most obvious reason for the similarities between the national historiographies in the Balkans is that they followed an existing pattern of writing “national history” imported from leading European schools during the nineteenth century. The model of national historiography was introduced in various Balkan countries both by local historians trained abroad and by some foreign scholars interested in the region. In some cases this was done by the same person for different national schools, as in the case of Konstantin Jireček, who wrote the first academic history of Bulgaria (1876) and an influential overview of Serbian medieval history (1911, 1912).

There is yet another reason for the similarities between the different national narratives—they developed in prolonged historiographical battles with one another. Historians from rival national “schools” addressed similar questions and interpreted (and over-interpreted) the same sources. This resulted in incompatible versions of the past that were often very similar in their “factual” aspect (events and personalities) and differed only in that they were narrated from the point of view of erstwhile rivals or enemies and their present-day historian “heirs.” Such debates were conducted not only between “Balkan” historiographies but also occasionally with historiographical schools of other neighbors in Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The authors in this volume are interested in how national(-ist) historians made use of the past, what portions of it they appropriated or rejected, and to what purposes and objectives. Moreover, they are interested in how historians of neighboring nations fought battles and even led protracted historiographical wars over previous possession of specific territories, historical entities, influences and legacies. These were battles to divide, sort out and disentangle while looking back from the standpoint of the present to what was shared, mixed, or divided along different lines in the past. Nations that came onto the scene of the battlefield later faced even more difficulty in carving out for themselves a share of the past, already divided and appropriated by others, and some even in choosing their ancestors. In the process history gave way to fantasy, as when Macedonians claimed Alexander the Great and Bosniaks claimed that they discovered pyramids in Bosnia, or when some scholars tried hard to prove that the South Slavic tribes were divided from very early on into “Bulgarian,” “Serbian,” “Croatian” and “Macedonian” Slavs, and to determine which lands they populated.

The choice of topics treated in this volume is not accidental. The legacies addressed by the authors are emblematic of the region. This goes without saying for the Byzantine and the Ottoman legacy, which stand in continuity (Iorga’s famous “Byzance après Byzance” thesis), and the latter epitomizes the region. But this is also largely true of the Thracian legacy as representative of the “Thracian-Illyrian” paleo-Balkan (non-Hellenic) culture, which, according to some historians, formed the foundation of the historical Balkan societies and cultures. The appropriation of the ancient Greek and the Roman legacies is touched upon only tangentially. While the Hellenic legacy is claimed by the present-day Greeks on the basis of the language and as part of their identity, and the Roman legacy in the region is claimed by the present-day Romanians on linguistic grounds and as an element in their “ethnogenesis,” neither is so central for the definition of the region as a whole, notwithstanding how influential they were. Also treated are more specific issues that have to do with the

major legacies but are important in themselves as well, such as how Bulgarian and Romanian historians still fight over the Second Bulgarian medieval kingdom contemporaneous with Byzantium and under its very strong influence. Another example is how historians of the various Balkan nations try to “synchronize” their histories with the (Western) European historical evolution, by discovering their own “Renaissances” and “Enlightenments”, while trying hard to ignore the Ottoman context. Some historiographical disputes inevitably remained outside our scope, like those between Bulgarian and Serb historians, Bulgarian and Macedonian historians, and Greek and Macedonian historians. Others were partially addressed in the previous volumes, such as those regarding ancient Macedonia. Yet we have dealt with the grand legacies that define the region or, in any case, define its imagining as a historical entity. It should be stressed that this is done not by directly addressing the questions of the significance and duration of the various legacies in various spheres, but by examining how the historiographies of the modern Balkan nations have appropriated (or disclaimed) these legacies. The historical imagination and imaginary are thus the main focus.

The authors tried hard to keep their distance from each side by taking a transnational and relational perspective. It is precisely because of the arbitrariness of the nationalist incursions into the past, which produced neat divisions and enclosures, that our interest in connectedness, commonalities and entanglements is valid and more to the point. Rather than endorsing the national standpoint or trying to arbitrate the “truth” on the issues, our approach attempts to transcend the controversies by taking account of the various perspectives and by contextualizing them and revealing their motivations.

The various imperial legacies treated here had a different fate at the hands of the national(-ist) historians of the various Balkan nations. The attitude of historians of one nation towards a certain legacy also varied over time between rejection, indifference, and inclusion in the national history and the national identity. Initially the empires of the region were not so attractive for national historians; only at a later stage did Greek and Turkish historiography start to represent the Byzantine and the Ottoman heritage as their own “national” heritage. For example, the Byzantine legacy (studied here by Diana Mishkova) was initially rejected by Greek intellectuals of the Enlightenment, who adopted the ancient Hellenes as forefathers of the Greeks. It was appropriated later on by Romantic or “critical” historians and ethnographers to supply the missing link between the ancient Hellenes and the modern Greeks, in which Orthodox Christianity and the Greek language of Byzantium were key to its rehabilitation.

In other cases, Byzantium became a “hereditary enemy” and its influence was considered harmful, for instance, for the Bulgarians, whose medieval states fought countless wars against the Empire. But in this case as well, it had a major role in identity-building by supplying the image of the enemy. The Serbs reached the height of power during Dušan's empire and, like the Bulgarians under Tsar Simeon and Tsar Ivan Asen II, wanted to conquer Constantinople, thus bequeathing national historians the imperial dream and the opposition to Byzantium together with accepting its influence willy-nilly. Yet the attitude changed over time, both for the Serbs and the Bulgarians, toward “reconciliation” and recognition of “Byzantinism” in the form of “Slavic Orthodoxy” and a “Byzantine-Slavic” civilization (it even reached the point where a Serb-Byzantine synthesis was asserted, though not a Bulgarian-Byzantine one).

Byzantium as a continuation of the Roman Empire and a “second Rome” also fulfilled an important role for the Romanians, who regarded themselves as an offspring of the Roman Empire (“Eastern Romanity”), whose colonists in the Balkans they claimed as their “forefathers”—either alone or mixed with the Dacians (a branch of, or related to, the Thracians). When Byzantium was not downgraded as usurped by the Greeks from the Romanians, the real heirs of the Romans, it was presumed to defend its Romanian “relatives” from barbarian incursions and to act as a beneficial influence on the rather late-blooming Romanian medieval states. Yet there was ambiguity here as well, especially regarding such Byzantine offshoots as the Patriarchy and the period of Phanariot rule (of supposedly surviving remnants of Byzantine aristocracy) in the Romanian principalities.

Thus historians in all Balkan countries started to evaluate positively the cultural osmosis between the Empire and its neighbors. The Byzantine heritage in the field of art was especially welcome, and it was widely used in the search for some “national style” in architecture. There were two further reasons for Balkan scholars' identification with Byzantium. It started to be perceived as “the other Europe” of the Middle Ages, as “our” alternative to Western civilization. And it allowed for the presentation of Ottoman civilization as “post-Byzantine.” In the case of Turkish historiography, Byzantium could be regarded as a respectable predecessor of the Ottoman Empire in the imperial tradition.

National historiographies apart from the Greek case started to pay more attention to ancient times, especially in the interwar period, with another peak in interest during the last few decades. To a large extent this was a response to the history of ancient Greece adopted very early on by the Greeks, so that the newly embellished history of the Dacians (in Romania since the end of the nineteenth century) and Thracians (in Bulgaria later on), Pelasgians and Illyrians (in Albania) and Hittites (in Kemal's Turkey) served to partly offset the

serious misbalance. The scarcity of sources allowed numerous interpretations and speculations to flourish. Present-day political agendas could be projected even more freely on ancient times than on other periods, in spite of, or precisely because of, the scarcity of sources. It turned out that the aforementioned tribes possessed a rich and original culture, that they bravely resisted foreign (especially Roman) invasions, and so on. In some cases alleged ethnic/linguistic continuity with ancient tribes was used as an argument in disputes with neighbors.

The Dacians (contemporaries of the Hellenes and of the Romans) were most important for the Romanians in a major variant of their ethnogenesis theory (dealt with in the chapter by Tchavdar Marinov). Unlike the Transylvanian Latinist school, which asserted pure Roman origins, later historians accepted the Dacian element on an equal footing in the Romanian “synthesis,” and some even prioritized it. The Thracians were also important for the Bulgarians, not so much as an ingredient in their ethnogenesis (though admitted as a third component of secondary importance), but rather as their predecessors in the “Bulgarian” lands and a source of national pride (bolstered by rich archaeological findings).

For the Bulgarians it was their first medieval empire that constituted the point of departure for the national continuity and a source of national glory, while the two major components in the ethnogenesis were the Turkic Bulgars and the Slavs. The second Bulgarian Kingdom was the next link in the continuity, yet it was also claimed by Romanian historians because of the probable Vlach (“Romanian”) descent of its founding dynasty, the Assenids (covered in the chapter by Roumen Daskalov). Somewhat ironically, the past co-operation between (onetime) Bulgarians and Romanians in fighting for their independence from Byzantium produced a feud between their historians. Everywhere national historians were preoccupied with continuity over time, projecting the history of “their” people as far in the past as possible, losing all credibility with creations of pure historical imagination. There was also deep concern for the continuity of presently inhabited territory and a demand for grandeur expressed in pride in rulers (or, more rarely, clerics) and in war victories as well as cultural feats. Unlike in the rest of Europe, in the Balkans the Middle Ages are the truly bright era, followed by the Ottoman “Dark Ages.”

The Ottoman legacy (addressed in the chapter by Bernard Lory) is the only one unanimously rejected by the Balkan national historians (yet not by the Muslim Bosniaks) because it entailed foreign political rule (traditionally called a “yoke”) and, together with it, the primacy of Islam, as well as the absence of one’s own state governed by indigenous elites. It also presents a major problem for national historiographies concerned with continuity. The first and

most simple solution was to devote as little attention as possible to these “Dark Ages.” For example, the history of several centuries of Ottoman rule was presented mostly as a fight against the oppressor (uprisings, the movement for political independence) and the successful preservation of “national” institutions under foreign domination, such as the Orthodox Church, different forms of local autonomy, and a few higher schools.

But this solution could not last long, and the national historians had to address the era more seriously. Initially the Ottoman invasion and the first decades of the Ottoman rule (at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century) were presented as a terrible period of massacres, mass enslavement and systematic destruction. This catastrophic theory served to portray the respective nation as a martyr but also to explain why there were not many traces from the allegedly illustrious medieval period (especially in Bulgaria and partly in Albania). Yet this played into the hands of the Turkish historians, who were regarded as opponents. In the 1940s and 1950s, Turkish specialists in Ottoman history began to present the immigration of Turkic-speaking Muslims in the Balkan provinces of the empire as the beginning of a new civilization in a loosely populated and underdeveloped area (similar to the catastrophic theory). Shortly thereafter, Balkan historiographies responded with a new concept—continuity. Starting mostly from the 1960s, some historians did their best to prove that most Muslims in the Balkans (not only peasants, but also craftsmen, tradesmen and soldiers) were in fact local converts. In general one can see in all Balkan historiographies a process of conversion of Ottoman history into a national (Albanian, Bulgarian, etc.) history “under Ottoman rule.” In a similar way the Ottoman heritage in urban culture, architecture and cuisine was accordingly transformed into Bulgarian, Albanian or Greek heritage. Another, more sophisticated maneuver was to present them as a common Balkan heritage and in this way to downplay their Ottoman and Oriental roots.

The autonomy of religious communities also became a matter of clashing interpretations. While more and more Ottomanist scholars have insisted since the early 1980s that the *millet* system (of religious communities) was not created in the fifteenth century, and that it was systematized only in the nineteenth century, the early dating is still largely used by national historians. From the point of view of Turkish national historiography, the autonomy of the non-Muslim *millets* testifies to the relatively liberal and tolerant nature of Ottoman rule, while the rest of the national historiographies in the region use the same concept to a very different purpose—autonomy is seen as a continuous national development under an imperial superstructure that remained entirely alien to the national Balkan traditions. The twin notions of continuity

(since the Middle Ages or even ancient times) and autonomy and self-sufficiency under the Ottomans thus prop up the “uninterrupted” national history of the Balkan peoples under the Ottomans. As regards the crucial period of national formation (known as the Revival) in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the national narratives typically depict dormant nations within a hostile Ottoman environment, not mixing with it and waiting for the proper persons and the proper moment to be “awakened” to a life of their own and to strive for liberation.

Only the Muslim (or partly Muslim) Balkan peoples, such as Bosniaks and a segment of the Albanian Muslims, regard the Ottoman legacy positively as part of their own history and identity. In the Turkish case the Kemalist revolution rejected the old Ottoman regime, but later on, Turkish historiography started to praise the glory of the first sultans (the “Classical Age”) and increasingly the prehistory of the revolution itself—the reforms in the nineteenth century. The official ideology had difficulties in integrating the reforms introduced by the immediate predecessors of the revolution, the Young Turks, out of concern that they would overshadow the changes under Mustafa Kemal. For a long time the perception of Sultan Abdulhamid II was extremely negative, but recently the Hamidian regime started to be idealized as an attempt to modernize the Empire and at the same time to preserve its independence. This was a major step in the reintegration of the Ottoman past in the Turkish national narrative.

Conversely, the European models of the Enlightenment and—going back even farther—of the Renaissance were so prestigious and desired by the educated elites (intelligentsia) of the modern Balkan nations that their historians tried to recast their quite different early modern pasts in terms of these eras and phenomena (as covered in the chapter by Alexander Vezekov). To be sure, we are speaking here of national narratives and concepts elaborated by the “traditional” national historiographies, but in spite of some new developments on the margins of the profession, they are still, by and large, prevalent and absolutely dominant in popularized versions and among popular milieus.

In all fairness, many national historians were excellent scholars who mastered many languages and a variety of research methods; some were also critical and self-limiting. They believed in “scientific” history, “objectivity” and (unitary) “truth.” Yet the interest in, and actually the passion for, history came from serving one’s nation: by proving its “historical rights,” nourishing national pride and what can generally be defined as the “justification” of one’s nation. They empathized with their compatriots in previous eras while disregarding and sometimes vilifying onetime enemies. This was done in most cases in good scholarly faith and with a belief in the educative value and the legitimacy

of such uses of history for the present. They hardly noticed or acknowledged the contradictions between the professed ideals of “objectivity” and nationalist partisanship. This is the nation-building type of “positivism” we do not identify with.

The authors of this volume are the core group of the Entangled Balkans project: Roumen Daskalov, Diana Mishkova, Alexander Vezenkov, and Tchavdar Marinov. There is also the valuable contribution of Bernard Lory from INALCO, Paris. Chris Springer did the copyediting again, and we would like to thank him for his dedicated work. The editor-in-chief of Brill's Balkan Studies Library, Zoran Milutinović, was helpful as always, and we feel greatly indebted to him. It is our pleasure and honor to acknowledge funding from the European Research Council in the form of an advanced research grant (Grant Agreement no. 230177) under the European Community's Seventh Framework Program, and to express our deepest gratitude for the support of this endeavor.

Ancient Thrace in the Modern Imagination: Ideological Aspects of the Construction of Thracian Studies in Southeast Europe (Romania, Greece, Bulgaria)

Tchavdar Marinov

Who Are the Thracians? An Outline of Ancient and Modern Views

“[...] the Thracian race is the most numerous, except the Indians, in all the world—and if it should come to be ruled over by one man, or to agree together in one, it would be irresistible in fight and the strongest by far of all nations, in my opinion [...]” Today, this excerpt from Herodotus¹ is practically obligatory to quote in monographs, articles and even in novels dedicated to the paleo-Balkan peoples known under the common ethnonym Thracians (referred to in Ancient Greek as *Thra[i]kes*, *Thrēikes*, etc.).² This is especially true in Romania and in Bulgaria, where scholars, writers, journalists and political propagandists have created an immense library of writings dedicated to these ancient populations. These countries have even institutionalized a specific field of Thracian studies—or “Thracology”—that covers a series of disciplines: archaeology, history and art history, classical philology, epigraphy and linguistics, the history of religions, Indo-European studies and ethnography.³ At first glance, this interest might be perfectly legitimate, given the historical data at our disposal.

Thracians were mentioned for the first time in the *Iliad*, while the last contemporary references to them are from the sixth century CE. By that time, it is likely that they were completely Romanized or Hellenized. Contrary to the

1 *Histories*, vol. 5, 3, translated by G.C. Macaulay.

2 Throughout this text I use different principles of transliteration of Classical and Modern Greek. While in the first case, I employ the standard system based on the Erasmian pronunciation, in the second, I have tried to follow the modern Greek phonetical features, although not to the extreme. Thus, while β is transliterated as *b* in the case of Ancient Greek and as *v* in Modern Greek, and η is \bar{e} and i respectively, in both cases the old diphthongs αi , ϵi , $o i$ are rendered as *ai*, *ei*, *oi*, in order to preserve a certain visual correspondence with the Greek original.

3 This large scope is often interpreted as a proof that Thracology is a “modern interdisciplinary scholarly discipline”: http://www.thracians.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=270 (accessed on January 20, 2013).

superlatives in Herodotus's description, the Thracians were certainly not the most numerous ancient people after the Indians, even if we add to them the Getae, the Dacians and other populations that are sometimes classified separately. Yet in the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods of ancient Greek history, they inhabited the territory (or parts thereof) of several modern countries—primarily Romania and Bulgaria, but also Greek Thrace and eastern Greek Macedonia, Turkish Thrace and also an area of northwestern Anatolia, as well as parts of Serbia, the Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Ancient sources also indicated that there were Thracian populations on a number of Aegean islands and in the core territory of Hellas. During the Roman Imperial period, they were scattered over a much larger territory: apart from the city of Rome itself and Italy, researchers have found information on Thracian soldiers, mercenaries and slaves in Egypt, in the Near East and elsewhere.

The Thracians certainly did not live on this space in isolation. Starting in the eighth century BCE, the Thracian coasts—first those by the Aegean Sea, followed by those by the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea—were intensively colonized by Greeks. By the mid-fourth century, Philip II, the famous king of Macedonia, launched a series of military campaigns that imposed Macedonian domination over Thrace. It continued until 281 BCE and the death of Lysimachus, diadochus (successor) of Alexander the Great and king of Thrace, which was followed by a massive invasion of Celts. The long Roman conquest started by the end of the second century BCE. It was complete by the mid-first century CE in Thrace and by the beginning of the second century to the north of Danube, in Dacia. The Thracians created kingdoms of varying strength during certain periods—such as the Odrysian kingdom from the fifth to fourth century BCE or the Dacian kingdom from the first century BCE to the second century CE. But, in fact, exactly when these kingdoms existed is subject to debate. The same holds true for particular questions such as the level of “urbanization” of their territories.⁴

In general, the case of the Thracians is notable for the impressive number of far-reaching conclusions, ambitious hypotheses and speculations dedicated to them and the equally numerous deficiencies in our basic knowledge about them. To begin with, the ancient Thracian language is almost completely unknown, despite the exhausting exercises of etymology made by modern

4 For an archaeological discussion of this topic (untainted by nationalist overtones): Hristo Popov, *Urbanizatsiyata vŭv vŭtreshnite rayoni na Trakiya i Iliriya prez VI-I vek predi Hrista* (Sofia: Nous, 2002). On the Odrysian state: Zofia Archibald, *The Odrysian Kingdom of Thrace: Orpheus Unmasked* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon and Oxford University Press, 1998).

linguists. There are a number of Thracian words mentioned by ancient authors (glosses), toponyms of supposedly Thracian origin and personal names preserved in literary sources and on epigraphic monuments. But since the Thracians did not have their own script and, with certain exceptions, did not use the Greek or the Latin alphabets in their language either, there are almost no indigenous written documents. In 1912, in southern Bulgaria (Ezerovo, not far from Plovdiv), a golden ring was discovered with a mysterious inscription in Greek characters that was believed to be the longest text in Thracian. However, subsequent attempts to decipher it did not yield convincing results.⁵ Thracian clearly belongs to the Indo-European linguistic family, but all the other classifications are disputable. It is not even clear if all the populations labeled as “Thracian” in the ancient sources spoke the same tongue: in the 1950s appeared the theory of the existence of two paleo-Balkan languages (“Thracian” proper and “Daco-Moesian”) on the territory that was supposed to be “Thracian.” More recent research demonstrates the existence of four onomastic zones (“properly Thracian,” Daco-Moesian, “Western Thracian” and the Bithynian in northwest Asia Minor).⁶

A long series of mysterious questions concerning the culture and the way of life of ancient Thracians remain open, from agriculture to religion. The data about the Thracian cults, for instance, come mostly from Greek as well as from Latin literary and epigraphic sources. Those that are attested to by the “domestic” Thracian iconographic material—like the famous Thracian Horseman (Heros)—are quite obscure, and they have generated numerous hypotheses and conclusions. For some Thracian deities, such as the long-debated Zalmoxis, we have not found any iconographic or epigraphic attestation, and practically all the data come from Greek and Latin literature. Nowadays, Thracian “civilization” is publicized worldwide through the famous “Thracian treasures”—fine creations of ancient artistic metalwork (toreutics)—as well as with the Thracian tombs discovered by archaeologists in mounds (tumuli). Some of them appear on UNESCO’s World Heritage List. Yet who created these “treasures” and sepulchral monuments, and what the nature is of their stylistic features and deeper semantics, remain a matter of debate. Professional

5 Recently, excavations at the archaeological site of Zōnē at the Aegean coast of Greek Thrace unearthed a certain number of dedications from the Archaic period, written in a version of Greek alphabet but in an unknown language that might be Thracian. Studies are still to be done, and even the results achieved so far remain unpublished: Dan Dana, “*Onomasticon Thracicum* (*OnomThrac*). Répertoire des noms indigènes de Thrace, Macédoine Orientale, Mésies, Dacie et Bithynie,” *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 17 (2011): 30.

6 Ibid., 32–33.

Thracologists have suggested that some of the finest objects of toreutics were produced in Greek workshops and that others bear clearly Persian Achaemenid features.⁷ Some specialists claimed that the Thracian chamber tombs were built by foreigners, for instance, by Ionian Greeks.⁸

Despite these and many other unclear aspects of ancient Thracian culture, throughout the last century and a half, it has been actively mobilized in Balkan national ideologies. As we will see in this essay, Romanians (since the late nineteenth century) and Bulgarians (more intensely since the 1960s and 1970s) have claimed not only the status of heirs of Thracian culture and “spirituality” but also Thracian “ethnic” ancestry. Modern Greeks, insofar as their imagined millenia-long historical continuity starts with the ancient Greeks—so fundamental to the modern conceptions of “European civilization”—did not have a particular need to claim Thracian ancestry. Yet, as we shall see, they have also used it in a number of particular contexts. For these three nations of Southeast Europe, the Thracian past contained important ideological stakes. Although the international debates about Thracian ancestry and heritage never reached the intensity of the present Greek-(Slav-)Macedonian competition for ancient Macedonians, the national-ideological aspects of the questions related to Thracians are still important.⁹ And curiously enough, Romanians, Bulgarians and Greeks are not the only nations concerned by the evolution of the interpretations of ancient Thrace.

In the past, proponents of many other national and “proto-national” ideologies have tried to symbolically appropriate this ancient population. Before it was “returned” to Romania, the name “Dacia” was the medieval classicist appellation for Denmark. Just as remarkable was another confusion: between the allegedly Thracian tribe of the Getae and the Goths. It was launched as early as the sixth century CE by the work *Getica* (or *De origine actibusque Getarum*), written by the Gothic-Roman historian Jordanes. As a result, in the Renaissance and early modern period, the Getae, with their hero and god Zalmoxis, were included in the official (proto-)national ideology of monarchies

7 Ivan Venedikov and Todor Gerasimov, *Trakiyskoto izkustvo* (Sofia: Bălgarski hudozhnik, 1973).

8 Gocha Tsetschladze, “Who Built the Scythian and Thracian Royal and Elite Tombs?” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 17 (1998): 55–92.

9 In fact, in the “Thracian case” as well, one can see phenomena similar to the “Macedonian.” On two occasions, in 2005 and 2008, the Bulgarian media alerted their audience that the Greeks—more specifically, Greek tour operators—were trying to appropriate... Orpheus. In response, Bulgarian tour operators presented their country at a tourist exhibition in Switzerland with the slogan “The Sacred Land of Orpheus,” while the village of Gela in the Bulgarian Rhodopes proclaimed itself “the birthplace of Orpheus.”

as distant from the Balkans as “Gothic” Sweden and “Visigothic” Spain. Closer to the medieval Romanian principalities—in Transylvania—the Dacians and the Getae were proclaimed ancestors of the local Saxons. Jakob Grimm was among the last authors to insist on the German character of these ancient peoples. But by the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the theory of Getic and Dacian ancestry was embraced in Poland, where it tended to replace the traditional “Sarmatian theory” of the origin of the Poles.¹⁰ As we will see, Lithuanian and Russian authors also insisted on a genetic link between their nations and the ancient Thracians, Getae and Dacians and influenced the development of the interpretations in the Balkans.

Moreover, quite unexpectedly, the theories about the Thracian language, area of settlement and historical destiny had (and still have) important repercussions in other national contexts, such as the Albanian and the Hungarian. Insisting on their nation’s “autochthonous” Illyrian origin, Albanian scholars never subscribed to the idea, launched by a Bulgarian linguist in the 1950s, that their language had Daco-Moesian roots. Just as eager to show that the Romanians were *not* autochthonous in Transylvania, Hungarian propagandist publications—by contrast—emphasize Albanian-Romanian connections and still seek to dismiss the “legend” of the Daco-Roman continuity. Amid endless quarrels with Bulgarian historians about Macedonia’s medieval and modern history, Macedonian classical scholars observed with anxiety the way the Bulgarian Thracologists pushed the western ethnic boundary of ancient Thracians deep into “their” Paeonian and ancient Macedonian territory.¹¹

Given all these claims and passionate debates that the Thracians have provoked in the context of modern Europe, one might be surprised to read how this population is portrayed in ancient Greek literature, especially that of the Classical period. Thracians were presented with all the typical traits of “barbarians”: they were primarily “warlike” and “bloodthirsty.” In general, their way of life was far from the norms of the Greek *nomos*: the Thracians were depicted as unreliable allies, immoral people with exotic and unbridled sexual behavior, and incorrigible drunkards.¹² Moreover, they were not considered particularly intelligent: Aristotle even spoke of a Thracian tribe that was able to count only

10 More on these ethnogenetic myths: Dan Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade. Istorie despre un zeu al pretextului* (Iași: Polirom, 2008), 199–219.

11 As attested to by Nade Proeva, “Savremeni makedonski mit kao odgovor na nacionalne mitove suseda: albanski panilirizam, bugarski pantrakizam i grčki panhelenizam,” *Zgodovinski časopis* 64 (2010), specifically, 188–189.

12 These data have already been well systematized by Gawril Kazarow, *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Thraker* (Sarajevo: J. Studnička and Co., 1916).

to four, because “they are like children (*hōsper ta paidia*) and their memory does not reach further” (*Problemata*, xv, 3 [911a]). Given this testimony, how did the wise and refined Thracian “spirituality” promoted by a series of modern interpretations arise?

It must be noted that ancient authors launched in parallel a somewhat different vision about some cases and “categories” of Thracians. An example of this is the mythical singer and mystagogue Orpheus (plus his “relatives” and *Doppelgänger* Musaeus, Eumolpus, Thamyras); to some extent also Zalmoxis—the Geta (Getic deity?) who, according to Herodotus, preached that nobody actually dies. Some writers provided data about extremely pious ascetic “sects” among Thracians that abstained from meat and sex.¹³ These apparent contradictions in the ancient (more precisely, ancient Greek) representations of Thracians certainly need a more complex explanation.

As the Romanian classical scholar Zoe Petre emphasized, the Thracians were projected as “the Other” of the Greek *polis*. Their habits represented a world “upside down,” an “anti-system” of the Greek political-religious system. The fundamental elements of the latter were always defined in contrast with their antitheses, which were located either in the distant past or in the “barbarian world.” Such elements were sacrifice, agriculture and marriage: the absence of one of these supposed the absence or the radical modification of the others. Thus, instead of marriage, which limits promiscuity for the sake of the social order within the *polis*, the Thracians pursued sexual freedom and odd premarital and marital customs; they did not have agriculture; their sacrifices were not like the standard Greek sacrifices of domestic animals to Olympic gods (Thracians allegedly also sacrificed people). Moreover, the “bizarre” world of the “barbarians” could be characterized not only by polygamy and all kinds of excesses but also by the opposite: celibacy, vegetarianism and an ascetic way of life.¹⁴ Orpheus, Zalmoxis and similar figures were part of the typical Greek cliché about the barbarian “alien wisdom”: they were like the Scythian Anacharsis and plenty of other figures from the East, from Egypt and from the West.¹⁵ In any case, one thing is clear: they are also personalities that we

13 This was the case with the *kapnobatai* and *ktistai* described by Strabo (*Geography* 7, 3, 3) and long discussed in modern scholarship.

14 See Zoe Petre, *Practica nemuririi. O lectură critică a izvoarelor grecești referitoare la geți* (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 36, 192–207. Petre refers to Louis Gernet, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Marcel Detienne and their historical-anthropological analyses of the ancient Greek religion and mentality.

15 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 29, 31; Dana, “Comment représenter les coutumes religieuses des Thraces (Hdt. V 3–8), entre Anciens et Modernes,” in *Les*

know thanks exclusively to Greek and Latin literature and Greek and Roman iconography.

Facing these data, modern European classical studies consecutively adopted two interpretative strategies. The first was positivistic: it was typical of the nineteenth century, when a number of scholars took literally the data about Thracian “wisdom” and the alleged Thracian “contributions” to the Greek culture and religion (music and mystery cults, associated with figures such as Orpheus). They looked, at the same time, for ways to reconcile these data with the general “barbarian” image of the “uncivilized” Thracians. The second strategy, which appeared by the end of the nineteenth century and developed during the twentieth, valued precisely this “barbarian” aspect of Thracian culture. It was emphasized in the new search for the “archaic,” the “orgiastic,” the “irrational”—that is, of the not-so-“Apollonian” sides of the Hellenic civilization. As the Romanian-French researcher Dan Dana asserts, in the imagination of European classical philologists and historians of religion, Thracian culture (as well as Scythian—the two were often amalgamated) became the favorite source of all sorts of “non-Greek” elements in Greek religion: “animism,” “shamanism,” “orgiastic cults,” “human sacrifices,” and so on.¹⁶ Finally, the anthropological dismissal of the concept of “primitive mentality” since the mid-twentieth century and the complete deconstruction of the progressive vision of human development additionally “rehabilitated” the image of cultural contexts like the Thracian that previously were unfavorably compared to models such as the Greek.

In the Western and Central European context, the Thracians have attracted the interest of French scholars and, even more, of German-speaking scholars. In the latter case, this interest was shared by representatives both of classical studies (*Altertumswissenschaft*) and of Indo-European or “Indo-German studies” (*Indogermanistik*). The first systematic analysis of the sources available on Thracians, particularly on the language and the religion of this paleo-Balkan population, was a monograph by Wilhelm Tomaschek, an Austrian of Czech origin, professor of geography at the universities of Graz and Vienna.¹⁷ His book is today considered a pioneering work of Thracology. Yet the reconstruction of the interpretations given to Thracian ethnicity, language, culture

représentations des dieux des autres (Suppl. Mythos 2), eds. Corinne Bonnet, Amandine Declercq and Iwo Slobodzianek (Salvatore Sciascia Editore, 2001). See also Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

16 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 258.

17 Wilhelm Tomaschek, *Die Alten Thraker. Eine ethnologische Untersuchung*, vols. 1–2 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1893–1894).

and religion by modern “non-Balkan” European specialists goes beyond the scope of the present study. Unfortunately, the absence of such presentation can make the theses proposed by the Balkan scholars look more aberrant and inept than they are in reality, compared with the ideas promoted by their Western colleagues. As a matter of fact, in plenty of cases, Romanian, Greek and Bulgarian authors were reproducing foreign ideas or developing them further. Below are a couple of examples.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, Balkan scholars often insisted that one of the most popular ancient Greek gods—Dionysus—was of Thracian origin. They likewise emphasized an alleged Thracian “belief in immortality” associated either with Dionysus, or with Orpheus, or with Zalmoxis, and based on a certain reading of ancient Greek data.¹⁸ Especially in the Romanian context, this religious doctrine was seen as a precursor of Christianity. But in 1865 the French archaeologist Léon Heuzey discovered in Thrace the “cradle of the orgiastic cult of Bacchus” (*berceau du culte orgiaque de Bacchus*). According to Heuzey, this cult was related to a doctrine of life after death promised to those who had been initiated into the Bacchic mysteries. Thus the belief in immortality was presented as a “salient trait” of the Thracian “national religion.”¹⁹ Heuzey was also tempted to interpret it in a more spiritual way, as an initiation anticipating Christianity.

Later, the German classical philologist Erwin Rohde likewise claimed that the cult of Dionysus was of Thracian origin. In his opinion, its orgiastic “furor” was a “foreign and strange” body in the Greek “Apollonian” tradition.²⁰ Rohde’s monograph *Psyche* had an enormous impact on the European classical scholars by the end of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth. In this work, Rohde also interpreted the Bacchic ecstasy as a “holy madness” through which the soul is united with the deity and thus immortalized. Through a series of speculations on the Dionysian, and hence “Thracian,” origin of the Pythian prophecies in Delphi and of cathartic practices in ancient

18 This was especially the case for Herodotus. Such was his description of the customs related to (birth and) death of the Trausi, a Thracian tribe from the Rhodopes: “[...] when a child has been born, the nearest of kin sit round it and make lamentation for all the evils of which he must fulfill the measure, now that he is born, enumerating the whole number of human ills; but when a man is dead, they cover him up in the earth with sport and rejoicing, saying at the same time from what great evils he has escaped and is now in perfect bliss” (*Histories*, vol. 5, 4, translated by G.C. Macaulay).

19 Léon Heuzey, “La vie future dans ses rapports avec le culte de Bacchus, d’après une inscription latine en vers de la Thrace,” *Comptes-rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 9 (1865): 372–378.

20 Erwin Rohde, *Psyche. Seelenkult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* (Freiburg i. B.-Leipzig: Mohr, 1894).

Greece, Rohde dramatically reinterpreted the orgy, turning it into its opposite: asceticism. He proclaimed it to be no less Thracian, as it was practiced within Orphic sects that venerated the “genuine” Dionysus—in the middle of a Greece that had already made the Thracian god too “Apollonian.” Rohde’s interpretation suggested that the ascetic mysticism of the Orphic movement somehow prefigured Christian spirituality.

After Rohde, the French archaeologist Paul Perdrizet identified the homeland of the ecstatic cult of Dionysus as the Pangaeum Mountains in south-east Macedonia, a region inhabited in ancient times by Thracians.²¹ Perdrizet also believed that Dionysus and Orpheus “prepared the way for Christ.” The Belgian historian Henri Grégoire was even able to exclaim: “What, in fact, would be the Greek religion without the contributions of Thrace? A religion without Dionysus, without Bacchants, without Iacchus from the Eleusinian mysteries, without Sabazios-Sabadios, without Orpheus...”²² Not surprisingly, these postulates would be readily repeated by Balkan scholars. More concretely, the Bulgarian Thracologists would exploit as much as possible the Western European writings on the “Thracian Dionysus,” as well as the rich literature dedicated to the Orphic religious doctrine and “movement” in ancient Greece.²³

The present work is focused on the national-ideological aspects of the study of ancient Thracians in Southeast Europe. Thus it does not pretend to provide an exhaustive presentation of the repertoire of Thracological problems, let alone of the enormous Thracological production. Only those questions that have a more direct relationship to the articulation of national identity and to a set of ideological values of the nation (spirituality, authenticity, originality) will be addressed here. It must be noted nevertheless that in some cases, respective national identity was projected—through Thracians—into a larger cultural background: Balkan, Eastern Mediterranean, Indo-European. To the extent that they are also loaded with certain implicit ideology, such cases will also be mentioned, although their value for the development of other disciplines, above all of “Balkan studies,” should be a topic of separate research. In fact, Thracian studies were often intertwined with constructions of wider cultural contexts of this kind. The famous Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga

21 Paul Perdrizet, *Cultes et mythes du Pangée* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1910).

22 Henri Grégoire, “Thraces et Thessaliens maîtres de religion et de magie ou l’étymologie de *thrēskeia* et d’*atasthalos*,” in *Hommages à Joseph Bidez et à Franz Cumont* (Brussels: Latomus, 1948), 379.

23 To cite just one study: William Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion: A Study of the Orphic Movement* (London: Methuen, 1952).

believed that the Thracians were “at the origin of everything in Southeastern Europe.”²⁴ The no-less-famous Romanian historian of religions Mircea Eliade believed that the “common Thracian foundation” was “the principal element of unity of all the Balkan peninsula.”²⁵

The focus on national ideology is the reason why the important research on Thracians or on other ancient populations sometimes believed to be related to them (Scythians, Phrygians, Trojans, Paeonians, etc.) made by scholars from the former Soviet Union (Russia, Ukraine, etc.),²⁶ Turkey and the former Yugoslavia (Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia) will be left aside here or treated only in passing. Unlike Romania, Bulgaria and (to a lesser extent) Greece, in these countries, the study of Thracians was not of major ideological relevance. However, it must be noted that the importance of Turkish scholarship in this field has grown considerably over the last couple of decades—a fact that was recently acknowledged by the organization of the latest (as of 2013) International Congress of Thracology in Istanbul (October 2010).

“The Bravest and the Most Just of All the Thracians”: The Invention of a Geto-Dacian Ancestry and Spirituality in Romania

Among all Southeast European national ideologies, Romanian nationalism has traditionally been the most interested in the symbolic promotion of Thracian cultural heritage and “ethnic” ancestry. Romanian scholars (historians, archaeologists, linguists) have been the most active in the study of the paleo-Balkan people—at least until the 1960s and 1970s, when their Bulgarian neighbors began producing a comparable number of Thracian-related works. But in Romania, ancient Thrace has also been addressed and exploited by writers, poets, playwrights and cinema directors, as well as by political figures, certainly more than in Bulgaria. Thus it seems much more central to the definitions of national identity.

24 Nicolae Iorga, “Éléments de communauté entre les peuples du Sud-est européen,” *Revue historique du Sud-est européen* 12 (1935): 115, quoted by Diana Mishkova, “The Politics of Regionalist Science: The Balkans as a Supranational Space in Late Nineteenth to Mid-Twentieth Century Academic Projects,” *East Central Europe* 39 (2012): 266–303. See Mishkova for more references to the “Thraco-Illyrian” base of the Balkans in the scholarly constructions of “Balkan identity” from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

25 Mircea Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan. Etudes comparatives sur les religions et le folklore de la Dacie et de l’Europe orientale* (Paris: Payot, 1970), 183.

26 Here, the place of the Republic of Moldova is somewhat special, however, given the ambiguous status of the Moldovan national identity with regard to the Romanian.

In general, there are two reasons for that. On the one hand, Thracian studies were a part of the search for “national specificity” (*specificul național*) that became so dominant in the intellectual landscape of Romania since the end of the nineteenth century, particularly in the 1930s. This search was supposed to alter the Romanian nation’s self-image as a culture “on the margins of Europe,” that is, of “civilization,” at “the gates of the Orient.” It was also able to give a somewhat positive spin to the country’s stigmatization as “Balkan.”²⁷

On the other hand, Thracian studies had a much more concrete task on a political level: it was supposed to prove the “autochthonous” character and the historical “continuity” of the Romanian ethno-nation in the territories of the modern Romanian state. This particularly concerned Transylvania—a much-disputed region with a Romanian ethnic majority but part of Greater Hungary since 1867. After its incorporation into the Kingdom of Romania in 1918, Transylvania was constantly claimed by Budapest. In fact, as early as 1871, the Austrian-German historian Eduard Robert Roesler published a study that confirmed a certain theory that already existed but was not systematized: that the ancestors of the modern Romanians came to present-day Romania during the medieval period, from territories south of the Danube.²⁸ Roesler’s subscription to this theory earned him the eternal enmity of Romanian historiography, as the thesis of Romanians’ (south-)Balkan origin meant in particular that the Hungarians had populated Transylvania before them. Thus Hungarians were confirmed as being the “first” and hence the “legitimate” masters of the region.

After the “Roeslerian attack,” Romanian scholars have constantly tried to show that their nation descended from a Roman or, eventually, Romanized autochthonous population that lived also, if not mostly, to the north of the Danube. The center of the process of Romanization is held to be in Transylvania—more precisely, in its southwestern part (plus the regions of Banat and Oltenia), which constituted the Roman province of Dacia (106–271 CE) after this territory was conquered by the Emperor Trajan. Romanian historiography speaks of a “Daco-Roman synthesis” in which the proportions

27 On the perception of the Balkans and of “the Orient” in Romania: Sorin Antohi, “Romania and the Balkans: From Geocultural Bivarism to Ethnic Ontology,” accessible online: http://archiv.iwm.at/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=235&Itemid=411 (accessed on January 20, 2013). One must also take into account the fact that in Romania, interest towards the Balkans was traditionally related to a certain political engagement with the destiny of the “brothers” to the south of Danube—the Aromanians and other Balkan Romance populations.

28 Eduard Robert Roesler, *Romänische Studien. Untersuchungen zur älteren Geschichte Romäniens* (Leipzig, 1871).

of autochthonous Thracians/Dacians and of Roman colonists vary according to the period in which the respective study was written and, sometimes, according to the personal ideology of the author.

Here a certain terminological clarification is needed. The ethnic terms used for the autochthonous population, both in scholarly publications and in all varieties of public and political discourse in Romania, are “Getae” and “Dacians,” more often than “Thracians.” The first two terms were applied by ancient authors to various populations that lived on territories which today are, for the most part, in Romania. Yet these populations were also identified as part of a bigger Thracian family—a thesis that is commonly accepted by Romanian historiography. For instance, according to Herodotus, the Getae were “the bravest and the most just of all the Thracians” (*Histories*, vol. 4, 93: *Thrēikōn eontes andrēiotatoi kai dikaiotatoi*).²⁹ In order to underline the unitary ethnic character of these peoples, Romanian historical literature uses the neologisms “Geto-Dacians” and “Daco-Getae” (*geto-daci*, *daco-geți*) and sometimes even “Thraco-Geto-Dacians” or “Thraco-Dacians.”

The last two expressions are certainly only scholarly terms, but Geto-Dacians and Daco-Getae also risk being a purely modern construction,³⁰ even though ancient writers such as Strabo or Pliny the Elder identified these two populations. The identification of Getae with Dacians is nevertheless largely problematic if it is put in the chronological and geographic context of ancient times. While the Getae were described by Herodotus as early as the fifth century BCE, the first reference to Dacians is only from the first century BCE (Julius Caesar, *Galic War*, vol. 6, 25). While the Getae were believed to populate a region that corresponds roughly to what is today northeast Bulgaria and Romanian Dobrudja (Dobrogea), the Dacians were situated in Transylvania. As artificial as it may be, the ethnonym Geto-Dacians/Daco-Getae was endowed with a national “mission”: it delineated the “Romanian” geographic space, that of the national “unity” from the Black Sea coast to the Hungarian plain.³¹

29 The epithets used by Herodotus in this case—“the bravest” (*andrēiotatoi*) and “the most just” (*dikaiotatoi*)—seem to be a common locus in the ancient literature for geographically distant “barbaric people.” It is used, for instance, for the Scythians: see Petre, *Practica nemuririi*, 88.

30 Curiously enough, the terms Geto-Dacians/Daco-Getae appeared for the first time in the Polish historiography of the nineteenth century: Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 216–219.

31 As underlined by Petre, *Practica nemuririi*, 276–288. These terms have since been questioned, but not abandoned, by Romanian archaeologists. According to Alexandru Vulpe, the current (as of 2013) director of the Vasile Pârvan Institute of Archaeology of the Romanian Academy, it is a harmless convention, and the efforts to replace it are

The heyday of the scholarly and public interest towards the Geto-Dacians and, in general, the Thracians in Romania was undoubtedly during the 1930s, but it was repeated in the 1970s and 1980s (and to large extent after 1989). These periods are certainly different in many respects: in the 1930s the Romanian political scene saw a move towards right-wing authoritarianism, royal dictatorship and a mass “contamination” of society, especially of the intellectual elite, with the fascist ideology of the Legion of the Archangel Michael (the Iron Guard).³² The 1970s and 1980s were years of communist rule, the personality cult of Nicolae Ceaușescu and autarchic state isolationism. Yet from an ideological point of view, these authoritarian periods shared basic common characteristics like nationalism—and its specific autochthonist version, involving the search for “national specificity.”³³

The intellectual climate of the post-communist transition was in many ways shaped by the heritage of these periods. In fact, nationalist communism had resurrected and used many of the nationalist interpretations of the 1930s, including those on the sublime “spirituality” and “political genius” of Geto-Dacians. After 1989 these interpretations were even further rehabilitated as intellectual guidelines, this time directed against the legacy of the allegedly “anti-Romanian” communism. Moreover, the end of strict state control over publishing and the partial de-legitimation of the previous academic literature led to the flourishing of an amateur literature on the “grandeur” of Thracians, often of excessive imagination, which opponents deride as an expression of “Dacomania” or “Thracomania” (*dacomanie, tracomanie*).³⁴ Yet as we shall see,

useless. See Gheorghe-Alexandru Niculescu, “Nationalism and the Representation of Society in Romanian Archaeology,” in *Nation and National Ideology: Past, Present and Prospects* (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2002), 209–234.

32 Specifically, on the intellectuals linked to it: Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991); Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The 1930s* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1999). See also Constantin Iordachi’s contribution to the second volume of the present work.

33 On Romanian “national communism”: Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991); Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003). See also Alexander Vezhenkov and Tchavdar Marinov’s contribution to the second volume of the present work.

34 See, for instance, Vasile Lica, “De la thracologie la thracomanie. Glose marginale,” in *Fontes Historiae. Studia in honorem Demetrii Protase*, eds. Corneliu Gaiu and Cristian Găzdac (Bistrița and Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2006), 1011–1027.

this literature is itself a continuation of publications from the beginning of the twentieth century and from Ceaușescu's period.

However, neither "Thracomania" nor academic interest in the ancient Geto-Dacians is necessarily so old. As emphasized in historiographic reflections, the first early modern Romanian national ideologists believed their people were of purely *Latin* origin. This choice seems "natural": unlike the other languages in Eastern Europe, the Romanian tongue has Latin roots, as was discovered by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Moldavian intellectuals such as the chronicler Miron Costin and the prince and man of letters Dimitrie Cantemir. The same was true of the authors from the "Transylvanian School" of the late eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century (Petru Maior, Samuil Micu, Gheorghe Șincai, Ion Budai-Deleanu). These authors embraced Roman ancestry, regarded as noble and prestigious across Europe. Moreover, they believed and attempted to demonstrate that the ancient Dacians were completely exterminated by the Romans.³⁵ They tried hard to prove that not a single drop of Dacian blood remained in the veins of Romanians. Dacians were clearly treated as aliens: Cantemir thought that they were Scythians and had the same gods as the Slavs.

Ironically, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the name "Dacia" was often applied to the modern Romanian space by *Greek* intellectuals residing in Wallachia and Moldavia (Dimitrie Philippide, Dionisie Fotino) and by authors influenced by Greek culture. These individuals also accepted the idea of a Daco-Roman mixing.³⁶ In this direction, from the mid-nineteenth century on, the initial "Latinist" interpretation of Romanian ethnogenesis grew more nuanced. As early as 1858, the poet Cezar Bolliac wrote the short text "On the Dacians" (*Despre daci*), where he expressed his admiration of the ancient people who had inhabited Romanian soil before the Roman conquest: they were a big and powerful nation, with a sublime religion based on a belief in immortality. That was why they were also the first to accept Christianity. Bolliac was also an amateur archaeologist searching for material traces of Dacians and even for a Dacian alphabet.³⁷

35 See Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2001), 86.

36 By the way, it was again Dimitrie Philippide who introduced the country's contemporary name (Romania). See Vasilis Gounaris, *Ta Valkania ton Ellinon. Apo to Diafotismo eos ton A' Pankosmio Polemo* (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2007), 69–70.

37 Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 91–92. See also Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*, 36–40 ("Romanticism, Dacianism, and the National Essence").

But the academic and popular perceptions evolved after the publication of *Did the Dacians Perish?* (1860), written by the renowned historian, linguist and folklorist Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu.³⁸ He dismissed the Transylvanian school's thesis that Trajan exterminated the Dacians, saying that the Roman emperor only conquered them. For Hasdeu, the Romanians were descendants of Dacians and Romans alike. He also acknowledged a Slavic element in Romanian ancestry (but tried to minimize its importance). Born in northern Bessarabia, which was then part of the Russian Empire, Hasdeu studied at Harkov/Harkiv University. Not surprisingly, his approach to Romanian ancestry was fashioned in part by this education. Under the influence of the Russian scholar Aleksandr Chertkov, Hasdeu believed in a Dacian-Slavic affinity.

For a time, Hasdeu's manifesto had no significant repercussions in the academic field. The Latin identity kept all its indisputable prestige. It was Romania's link to the West, to "European civilization" and, more precisely, to the "great Latin sister" (*marea soră latină*)—France—the universal model not only of "civilization" but also of a centralized and homogenizing nation-state. While the historiography was still reluctant to revise the unique status of the ancient Romans as Romanian ancestors, the Dacian opponents of the latter won a more visible place in romantic poetry, particularly in the works of Mihai Eminescu, today considered to be the greatest national poet. He wrote, for instance, the drama *Decebal*, dedicated to the famous Dacian king and adversary of Trajan.

But the intellectual climate in Romania was changing. Founded in 1863, the Junimea literary society rejected what it saw as a stubborn imitation of Western civilization—particularly of the "Latin sister" France—which had generated in Romanian culture only "forms without substance." These were criticized in 1868 in a programmatic text by Titu Maiorescu, the leading figure of the new ideology of *junimism*.³⁹ And not by chance, Maiorescu also ridiculed the Transylvanian School's insistence on assigning Romanians a purely Latin origin. Maiorescu's circle emphasized the "organic" development of culture as the only one that produced the desired "substance"—contrary to the borrowings and imitations of external "forms." Thus the Dacian "foundation" of Romanian nation and culture became important, in contrast to the Latin

38 Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, "Perit-au Dacii?" *Foița de istorie și literatură* 1 (1860).

39 Titu Maiorescu, "În contra direcției de astăzi în cultura română," *Convorbiri literare* 19 (1868): 305–306. On *junimism* and the theory of the "forms without substance": Keith Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866–1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 56–67, as well as Diana Mishkova and Roumen Daskalov's contribution to the second volume of the present work.

heritage associated with France and the West. In the long run, this program was also the beginning of the construction of “national specificity”—a concept that would acquire various definitions in the intellectual trends that followed *junimism*.

In 1880 the first Romanian scholarly monograph on ancient Dacians appeared—Grigore Tocilescu's *Dacia before the Romans*. Tocilescu rejected the theories claiming the German/Gothic, Celtic or Slavic ethnic belonging of the Getae and of the Dacians and asserted their Thracian character.⁴⁰ Yet Tocilescu did not identify Getae and Dacians: he even presented the latter as morally “purer” than the former (monogamous and clear-headed, unlike the Getae).⁴¹ Nevertheless, after Tocilescu, Romanian scholarship always treated the Getae and the Dacians as the same people. It should be noted that Tocilescu also insisted that relatively few Dacians survived the wars with the Romans. The Romanians thus appear to be again (almost) a purely Latin people, descendants of Roman colonists; they are still not considered to be the product of Romanization of an autochthonous population.⁴²

Apart from the “ethnic” problem, a particular question addressed by Tocilescu—as well as by the authors before him (Bolliac, Hasdeu)—was the culture, and more precisely, the religion of this population. Since Herodotus, the Getae have been famous for one characteristic, recounted in a plethora of versions by a long series of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, medieval Western European, Renaissance and early modern writers, as well as by modern scholars. This is the alleged Getic “belief in immortality,” particularly associated with the figure of Zalmoxis, who was first mentioned by Herodotus.⁴³ The

40 Grigore Tocilescu, *Dacia înainte de Romani* (Bucharest, 1880).

41 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 301.

42 Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 93.

43 The story is narrated in *Histories*, vol. 4, 93–96: “[...] And their belief in immortality is of this kind (*Athanatizousi de tonde ton tropon*), that is to say, they hold that they do not die, but that he who is killed goes to Salmoxis, a divinity, whom some of them call Gebeleizis [...] This Salmoxis I hear from the Hellenes who dwell about the Hellespont and the Pontus, was a man, and he became a slave in Samos, and was in fact a slave of Pythagoras the son of Mnesarchos. Then having become free he gained great wealth, and afterwards returned to his own land: and as the Thracians both live hardly and are rather simple-minded, this Salmoxis, being acquainted with the Ionian way of living and with manners more cultivated than the Thracians were used to see, since he had associated with Hellenes (and not only that but with Pythagoras, not the least able philosopher of the Hellenes), prepared a banqueting-hall, where he received and feasted the chief men of the tribe and instructed them meanwhile that neither he himself nor his guests nor their descendants in succession after them would die; but that they would come to a

entire “Zalmoxological” tradition was probably based solely on Herodotus’s account: apart from the Greek and Roman literary versions of the story, there is absolutely no data showing a real cult of Zalmoxis, nor a local Getic tradition regarding him as a civilizing reformer or a philosopher.⁴⁴ Yet following all the interpretations treating him as a god, a hero, a sage of exceptional wisdom (but also as an impostor and a charlatan!), in the modern Romanian context, Zalmoxis gradually became an emblem of the national spirituality. As for Tocilescu, he interpreted Zalmoxis as a Getic deity and linked him to the cult of Sabazios, whom he saw as a Thracian version of Dionysus.

Soon, in the first volume of his great synthesis of the history of Romanians, Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol put forth his view of Getic and Thracian religion.⁴⁵ The main doctrine of the Getic religion was again the immortality of the soul—a belief Xenopol considered “Aryan.” Initially polytheist, this religion was reformed by Zalmoxis, who introduced an Iranian type of dualism: the historian established a connection between the “reform” of Zalmoxis and that of Zarathustra, who had recently been popularized by Friedrich Nietzsche (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883–1885). Xenopol and the other historians from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century (Dimitrie Onciul, Nicolae Iorga) accepted the thesis of a Daco-Roman mixture but still privileged the Roman element: the Romanians were imagined as descendants chiefly of Roman colonists.

The treatment of Romanian ancestry changed further after World War I, in the context of the interwar “Greater Romania.” The leading intellectual trend became less progressive and more conservative, and in many cases

place where they would live for ever and have all things good. While he was doing that which has been mentioned and was saying these things, he was making for himself meanwhile a chamber under the ground; and when his chamber was finished, he disappeared from among the Thracians and went down into the underground chamber, where he continued to live for three years: and they grieved for his loss and mourned for him as dead. Then in the fourth year he appeared to the Thracians, and in this way the things which Salmoxis said became credible to them [...]” (translated by G.C. Macaulay).

44 This is the thesis of the voluminous work of Dan Dana (*Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*), who has analyzed an enormous corpus of versions and of interpretations of the story, from Herodotus to the present day. The corpus was also published by Dana: *Fontes ad Zalmoxin pertinentes / Izvoare privitoare la Zalmoxis* (Iași: Editura Universității, 2011). See also Petre, *Practica nemuririi*, 170. Despite the exceptional importance of the figure of Zalmoxis in modern Romanian scholarship and imagination, the present text will be extremely concise in dealing with this “file,” as Dana’s work on the subject is practically exhaustive.

45 Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, vol. 1 (Iași, 1888).

anti-modern and anti-European. “National specificity” became the main subject of the intellectual debates, and it was generally discovered in the idealized, ahistorical setting of Romanian village life. This ideology was first expressed in the *sămănătorism* of the first decade of the century, and its main promoter was Nicolae Iorga. Yet during the 1920s, its “romantic” overtones disappeared as it morphed into a more spiritualized nationalist, autochthonist, fundamentally Orthodox Christian and more violently anti-Semitic version. It found its intellectual expression in the journal *Gândirea*, edited by the theologian and philosopher Nichifor Crainic, and in the writings of the broad circle of authors associated with it.⁴⁶

It was in *Gândirea* that, in 1921, the philosopher Lucian Blaga announced in a short text his theory of the Romanian “non-Latin essence.”⁴⁷ Blaga opposed the hitherto dominant Latinist tradition through his insistence on the exuberant vitality of Thracian and Slavic origin (“*un bogat fond slavo-trac, exuberant și vital*”) that he discovered in Romanian folk mentality. In his opinion, the subconscious elements of this essence contradict the Latin balanced rationality and silent harmony. Moreover, Blaga clearly sees these elements as the result of an ethnically mixed ancestry. His ideas of Thracian vitality and highly spiritual worldview were simultaneously mirrored in his “pagan drama” *Zamolxe* (the title being a Romanianized version of “Zalmoxis”).

In another famous work,⁴⁸ Blaga conceptualized the “mioritic space” as a subconscious “stylistic” matrix of the Romanian mentality and culture. The philosopher was inspired by German ethnologist Leo Frobenius’s theory positing a special link between landscape and “cultural style.” Blaga took as a typical Romanian landscape a succession of hills and valleys with an undulating horizon. Here the term “mioritic,” used for this “undulating landscape,” is a reference to the folk ballad “Miorița,” which already had a central place in the interpretations of the Romanian “national character.”⁴⁹ After Blaga, the ballad would also be extremely important in the interpretations of the Geto-Dacian

46 Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866–1947*, 67–71; 298–319.

47 Lucian Blaga, “Revolta fondului nostru nelatin,” *Gândirea* 1 (1921): 181–182.

48 Lucian Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic* (Bucharest: Cartea românească, 1936).

49 Known in a variety of versions from different parts of Romania, the ballad speaks of a Moldavian shepherd who accepts with serenity his impending death. An enchanted ewe tells him that two other shepherds are plotting his murder, but he replies that the only thing he wants is to be buried by the sheep’s pen. He also asks the ewe to tell the other sheep that he had in fact married a princess, the “world’s bride” (*a lumii mireasă*), and that the wedding was marked by a falling star and was attended by the elements of nature (the sun, the moon, mountains, trees, birds). “Miorița” was first published in the mid-nineteenth century by the writer Vasile Alecsandri.

“belief in immortality” and “joy of death” and of its “survival” in Romanian folk culture.

The year 1926 saw the publication of what was certainly the most influential work on the ancient Getic and Dacian past in Romania: *Getica*, by Vasile Pârvan. A monumental opus, written by the father of the Romanian archaeological school, *Getica* immediately became a major point of reference and a source of scholarly and literary inspiration. It also entrenched a number of dogmata in the perception of the Romanian autochthonous “essence.” To begin with, Pârvan introduced a fundamental distinction between Dacians and Getae on the one hand, and “southern Thracians” on the other. The problem is that much of the ancient Greek literature, especially from the Classical period, presents the Thracians in general as drunkards, lazy and vicious people of exotic and unbridled sexual behavior. Modern scholars emphasized their “orgiastic” character as well as the alleged Thracian origin of the Dionysian cult practices. This image obviously contradicted the Romanian perception of the Getae as highly spiritualized believers in immortality.

Pârvan’s solution was simple: he presented the Getae and the Dacians as a sober peasant people, monogamous, quiet, composed, highly moral and pious in every respect.⁵⁰ They believed in immortality and in the continuation of life in a kind of Valhalla.⁵¹ According to Pârvan, the Getic/Dacian religion was ascetic and “aniconic”: the latter would become an obligatory *locus communis* in Romanian scholarship. In fact, Pârvan treated the Geto-Dacians almost as monotheists—or as “henotheists.”⁵² Specifically, he insisted that the Getic religion was “uranian,” involving a supreme god—the god of the sky (the “serene sky,” as he sometimes puts it). Yet at times he tended to see this god also as a unique god (*un singur zeu*) of Geto-Dacians.⁵³ His “aniconic” cult was practiced in the way that would be appropriate for a “uranian” type of cult: in the open air, on mountaintops.⁵⁴

At the same time, Pârvan ascribed to the southern Thracians all the decadent characteristics that abound in the ancient sources: unlike the Geto-Dacians,

50 Vasile Pârvan, *Getica. O protoistorie a Daciei* (Bucharest: Cultura națională, 1926), e.g., 131–132, 147.

51 Ibid., 160.

52 Ibid., 156–157. Pârvan used a concept of the German linguist and historian of religion Friedrich Max Müller. Pârvan’s description is confused: sometimes he also speaks of the existence of a Great Goddess in the Geto-Dacian religion.

53 Pârvan, *Getica*, 660. It must be noted that the thesis of the “singular god” of Thracians was launched by the French archaeologist Georges Seure. See Georges Seure, “Les images thraces de Zeus Kéraunos,” *Revue des études grecques* 26 (1913): 224–261.

54 Pârvan, *Getica*, 151–153, 659–660.

they were “chthonic” and ecstatic polytheists influenced by Mediterranean religious models. Pârvan believed that the Thracians were “denationalized” and “uprooted” by these foreign influences: their culture was “chthonized” (*chthonizarea*) and “orgiasticized” (*orgiastizarea*) by its contact with the Mediterranean mentality.⁵⁵

Here, his discourse becomes overtly racial: the Getae “remained an Indo-European people with a Nordic mentality [*mentalitate nordică*], while the Thracians mixed, like the Greeks and the Italic peoples, with the Mediterranean race and instituted a mixed culture, in which many elements . . . are southern, not northern.”⁵⁶ The Romanian ancestors were closer to the northern Indo-European populations, not only culturally but also in terms of biological phenotype: Pârvan emphasized that they were blond. Obviously, Pârvan’s theory falls completely into the modern Aryanist approach: Geto-Dacians were a heroic blond people following a highly spiritualized belief in immortality on mountaintops.⁵⁷ Simultaneously, with its insistence on their peasant character, Pârvan’s theory belonged fully to interwar Romanian intellectual anti-modernism and traditionalism, with its fascination with the atemporal archetypal character of the Romanian village.⁵⁸

However, the Romanian ancestors’ peasant character did not mean lack of grandeur. According to Pârvan, the Dacians, a powerful and numerous people with a unique civilization, were the only Thracian nation to create a state (a point of view that certainly contradicts the later Bulgarian emphasis on the political might of the southern Thracian Odrysian state). In Pârvan’s view, by the time of the Roman conquest, Dacia was a great kingdom and—equally important—was already influenced by Latin civilization. On the one hand, Pârvan imagined Dacia to be a highly civilized “self-conscious nation” that had nothing to do with the mentality of dispersed barbarian tribes. On the other, this “nation” was absolutely complementary to the other ancestors of

55 Ibid., 160–161. Much later, a difference between Geto-Dacians and southern Thracians in the religious sphere was claimed by the *Dictionary of Religions* of Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu, where a whole chapter is dedicated to the Thracian religion: *Dictionnaire des religions* (Paris: Plon, 1990).

56 Pârvan, *Getica*, 657.

57 As early as 1894, the archaeologist Teohari Antonescu discovered the homeland of the “Aryans” in Dacia: Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 96–97.

58 As Lucian Boia emphasizes, “for Pârvan, Dacia and Romania make up a whole, a ‘trans-historical’ civilization whose religious, cultural, and moral features are those of the idealized autochthonous peasant synthesis.” (Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 66).

Romanians—the Romans—whom Pârvan presented in a very idealistic way as well.

The political motives behind Pârvan's treatment of "ancestors" are especially visible in his promotion of Dobrudja (the "Getic land") as an original focus of Romanian ethnic "formation." This emphasis was meant not merely to assert the legitimacy of Romanian "ownership" of a region simultaneously claimed by a neighboring country (Bulgaria). Dobrudja (Scythia Minor) was conquered by the Romans considerably earlier than Trajan's Dacia, and it has many more Roman monuments and traces of Roman rule than huge regions of modern Romania that were not part of the Roman Empire. Pârvan imagined and tried to prove some special relationship between the two foci of "Daco-Roman synthesis"—one to the east and the other one to the west on the map of interwar Greater Romania. There were allegedly many connections between the two regions, including roads, and Roman soldiers, merchants and Dacian peasants allegedly circulated between them.⁵⁹ Thus the rest of Dacia that was not under Roman rule was able to join the "Daco-Roman synthesis": it was Romanized by Transylvanian-Dobrudjan "interaction."

After Pârvan's voluminous work, the Geto-Dacians tended to become the quintessential Romanian ancestors: their sublime moral and spiritual character was fully accepted, although Pârvan's sharp distinction between them and the other Thracians was softened over time. The autochthonist drive and the nationalist mysticism of the 1930s largely redirected the intellectual interest away from the "Western" Latin references and closer to the ancestors who were both "more ancient" on Romanian soil and spiritually "more original" with their "Zalmoxian belief in immortality."⁶⁰ The historical mythology of the fascist Legionary movement both expressed and promoted this orientation.

There was another specific reason why the Legionary discourse promoted the Geto-Dacians: their alleged "anticipation" of Christianity, detected in their

59 See Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 119.

60 In 1941, on the pages of the Legionary newspaper *Cuvântul*, the historian Petre Panaitescu (rector of the University of Bucharest during the rule of the Iron Guard) exclaimed: "We are Dacians! In our physical being, in the being of our souls, we feel ourselves to be the descendants of that great and ancient people who were settled in the Carpathian mountains centuries before Trajan. We have no beginning, we have always been here . . ." References to the "Dacian race," the "Dacian blood" and so on follow. See Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 69. The "Roman ancestors" were never abandoned, though. According to the common narrative that crystallized in that period, Romanians inherited different values from their ancestors. From the Dacians they adopted a high spirituality based on the belief in immortality of the soul and the discounting of death. From the Romans they adopted a rational equilibrium and a sense of order.

“belief in immortality.” Starting in the early twentieth century, Romanian writers insisted that the main doctrines of Christianity already existed in the Getic/Dacian religion.⁶¹ And it must be noted that the dominant version of Romanian fascism—the ideology of the Iron Guard—was fundamentally Christian Orthodox and deeply suffused with mystic Christian symbolism: not by chance, the Iron Guard was founded in 1927 as the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Thus, on the one hand, the thesis of Geto-Dacian “proto-Christian” spirituality catalyzed the development of Legionary imageries about Zalmoxis and the Getae. On the other hand, these imageries made Getic spirituality even more like Romanian Orthodox Christianity. As a result, in the writings of this period, the religion of the Romanian non-Latin ancestors becomes strictly monotheistic and ascetic. Its mystical doctrine of immortality was cited to explain the “fact” that the Geto-Dacians did not fear death and never hesitated to sacrifice themselves for their “nation.”⁶² The heroic overtones of this rhetoric went hand-in-hand with extreme exaggerations of Getic/Dacian grandeur, which had “imperial” characteristics.

In this case, the source of inspiration also predates the 1930s: it is the massive work *Prehistoric Dacia* by the ethnologist and historian Nicolae Densușianu, published in 1913 (two years after his death).⁶³ Today Densușianu is regarded as founder of the particular genre that many Romanian academics call “Thracomania” or “Dacomania.” According to Densușianu, the geographic space of modern Romania was the cradle of a powerful prehistoric “Pelagian Empire” created in 6000 BCE. It conquered Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa (including Egypt) and a large part of Asia. Hence the Carpatho-Danubian region was the motherland of all European and other civilizations. Densușianu also believed Latin and Dacian to be forms of the same language: the Latins came to Italy from Dacia. Densușianu gave as “evidence” Trajan’s Column in Rome, with its frieze representing the victorious military campaigns of the Roman emperor in Dacia: the Dacians and the Romans on it appear to be communicating without interpreters. Rejected by scholars as Xenopol and Pârvan as a diletantish and chauvinist fantasy, Densușianu’s maximalism reappeared by the beginning of World War II.

61 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 413.

62 The Legionary ideology even elaborated a “cult of death” and spoke of “love of death” as an attitude dating back to the ancient Thracians. According to the founder of the Iron Guard, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “the Legionnaire loves death and he accepts the baptism of death (*botezul morții*) with the serenity of the Thracian ancestors”: Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Doctrina mișcării legionare: prezentare concisă* (Bucharest: Lucman, 2003), 52.

63 Nicolae Densușianu, *Dacia preistorică* (Bucharest: Carol Göbl, 1913).

This was when authors like the writer Ioan Brătescu-Voinești claimed that all Romance languages were of Dacian origin: the Romans were descendants of Geto-Dacians, the Latin language was a literary form of Dacian—hence, Italian, French and Spanish had “Romanian” roots.⁶⁴ Thrace/Dacia was presented as a real and spiritual empire and a cradle of European values. Thus the Latinist interpretation from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was completely reversed, but without a rejection of Romans: they were simply Dacians as well. At the same time, the references to “empires” and to “European values” were not only the consequence of historical megalomania: this was already the time of the “holy war” against “Asiatic Russia,” during which the official propaganda of Marshal Ion Antonescu’s regime depicted Romania as a champion of European identity.⁶⁵

The imperialist construction of Geto-Dacian and Daco-Roman antiquity crumbled in 1944–1945 as a result of the communist takeover in Romania. Initially despised by the majority of Romanians as an alien (Russian but also Jewish) occupation, the new regime helped confirm this impression in the field of ancient and medieval history. The new legislator in this field, Mihail Roller, imposed a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the early Romanian history that shocked scholars and intellectuals by introducing the Slavs as the legitimate “ancestors” of Romanians. In the 1950s archaeologists were obliged to discover sites proving a Slavic presence on the territory of modern Romania.⁶⁶ With de-Stalinization in the mid-1950s, Roller fell from grace, but his name remained synonymous with extreme political manipulation of the Romanian past (disdained even more because of Roller’s Jewish origin).

Nevertheless, the Slavs were far from being the only Romanian ancestors, even during the Stalinist period. Wittingly or unwittingly, the communist regime emphasized Dacian ancestry as well. In the field of ancient history and archaeology, the new authorities encouraged research on the native population of Dacia, as the study of Roman rule and culture was seen as a possible infiltration of “Western influence.” Thus the communist authorities effectively reconfirmed the previous juxtaposition of the “autochthonous Dacians” and

64 Ion Brătescu-Voinești, *Originea neamului românesc și a limbii noastre* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1942).

65 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 321–322.

66 Virgil Mihăilescu-Bîrliba, “Impact of Political Ideas in Romanian Archaeology before 1989,” *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica* 3–4 (1996–1997): 160. To some extent, the same period also emphasized the role of Scythians—a people who were autochthonous on the territory of the USSR and were studied extensively by the Russian/Soviet Scythological school.

the (now negatively connoted) “Latin connections to the West.” Initially, the Roman domination was also presented in class-ideological terms as destructive and oppressive, while the “Dacian masses” played the role of the oppressed and the exploited.

Thus throughout the 1950s, Romanian archaeologists made important discoveries related to the Thracian/Geto-Dacian past. The excavations in Munții Orăștiei unearthed a number of Dacian fortresses and sanctuaries that changed the way Dacian culture was interpreted.⁶⁷ In fact, these discoveries revived the depiction of Dacia as a unique and grand civilization. With its typical cultural-historical (meaning “ethnic”) approach, Romanian archaeology started discovering “Dacian” sites almost everywhere, as well as “typical” Dacian artifacts like the “Dacian mugs”—which otherwise were found as far away as Budapest and even Burgenland.⁶⁸

With the “liberalization” of the post-Stalinist period, the “Daco-Roman synthesis” again became a topic of special concern. In the Romanian context, archaeology had a crucial task: it was supposed to provide evidence of continuity of settlement and culture after the abandonment of the Roman province of Dacia by the Emperor Aurelian in 271 CE. It was up to archaeology to find “indisputable” proof of the continuity of the “Daco-Romans” on the present Romanian territory, as the written sources, unfortunately, speak not only of the retreat of the Roman/Romanized population from it but also of populations migrating to it continuously throughout the centuries.⁶⁹

This problem extends beyond archaeology. Linguistics was also expected to reinforce the theory of continuity. As early as 1774, the Swedish historian Johann Thunmann detected pre-Latin elements in the Romanian language;

67 See Constantin Daicoviciu and Hadrian Daicoviciu, *Sarmizegetusa. Cetățile și așezările dacice din Munții Orăștiei* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1962). On the development of Romanian Thracian archaeology after World War II: Radu Vulpe, “Histoire des recherches thracologiques en Roumanie,” *Thraco-Dacica* 1 (1976): 37–43.

68 For a critical survey of nationalism in Romanian archaeology: Niculescu, “Nationalism and the Representation of Society in Romanian Archaeology.”

69 Gheorghe-Alexandru Niculescu, “Archaeology and Nationalism in *The History of the Romanians*,” in *Selective Remembrances: Archaeology in the Construction, Commemoration, and Consecration of National Pasts*, eds. Philip Kohl et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 134. The difficulty of providing similar evidence is the reason why Romanian archaeologists still speculate on the existence of archaic village communities (*obști sătești*), imagined in the 1920s by the historian Nicolae Iorga as “popular Romaniae”: stable cores of Daco-Roman population and culture that allegedly survived for centuries without state organization. On Iorga’s concept, see Roumen Daskalov’s contribution to the present volume.

these were later confirmed by linguists such as the Slovenes Jernej Kopitar and Franc Miklošič. These scholars paid special attention to the fact that the Romanian language shared many of these elements with Albanian.⁷⁰ These non-Latin, non-Slavic, non-Greek and non-Turkish characteristics and words were logically attributed to the paleo-Balkan linguistic base, defined by the different authors as Thracian, Thraco-Dacian, Thraco-Illyrian, and so on. In Romania, the Albanian-Romanian parallelisms were confirmed by Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, who concluded that “the Albanians are our good brethren from the same Dacian blood.”⁷¹ However, the idea that the common elements of the two tongues were of Thracian or Dacian origin would later (especially during the communist period) be rejected by Albanian scholars, who insisted that their own language was of Illyrian origin. Not surprisingly, their explanation was that the elements in question show an Albanian influence over Romanian (an idea expressed during the interwar period by the Austrian Albanologist Norbert Jokl). What makes this idea especially unacceptable in the Romanian context is its inference that the ancestors of Romanians and Albanians once lived together (an “Albano-Romanian symbiosis”). This point actually calls into question the autochthony of the Romanians in the territories north of the Danube and supports the Hungarian claim that Transylvania was first populated by Hungarians.

Trapped in this political imbroglio, the Romanian scholars constantly struggled to prove that the common linguistic base was in fact Thracian—a thesis that allowed the theory on Romanian autochthony to be maintained. Thus the political stakes were an additional impetus for the development of the scholarly interest towards the language of the Thracian/Geto-Dacian “ancestors” in Romania. In 1959 an important monograph on the question appeared, authored by the linguist Ion Iosif Russu, in which he demonstrated the particular character of “Thraco-Dacian” among the Indo-European languages (including with regard to Illyrian).⁷² In other works, Russu reduced the list of common

70 These include a series of common words, some of which are quite similar (*i/e bukur*—“beautiful,” “nice” in Albanian, vs. *bucuros, bucuroasă*—“glad,” “cheerful” in Romanian); common grammatical characteristics like the post-positive definite articles, the one for feminine being strikingly similar (*a* instead of *ă / ë* in the indefinite form); typical phonemes (*ă* in Romanian written as *ë* in Albanian); phenomena from the phonological history of the two languages (such as rhotacism). On these similarities, see Grigore Brâncuș, *Cercetări asupra fondului traco-dac al limbii române* (Bucharest: Dacica, 2009).

71 Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, “Cine sunt albanesii?” *Analele Academiei Române* 23 (1901): 103–113.

72 Ion Iosif Russu, *Limba traco-dacilor* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RPR, 1959).

Albanian-Romanian features and attacked both the thesis of Albanian influences over Romanian and the concept of a Balkan *Sprachbund*.⁷³

Russu's contribution to Thracian studies was not only in the field of linguistics. For most of the communist era, Romania's official interpretation of Thracian religion was his. Countering Pârvan's mono-/henotheistic thesis, Russu defended the polytheistic character of the Thracian cult system. It was centered around two gods: a "chthonian" one (Zalmoxis or "Zamolxis"—according to Russu's etymologies, this is the correct form of the name) and a "uranian" one (Gebeleizis).⁷⁴ Moreover, in an evolutionist manner, Russu claimed that the Thracians were socioculturally backward and even that the Getae were more "primitive" than the other Thracians. This was a complete reversal of the picture from the interwar period, during which the Geto-Dacians were proclaimed morally, spiritually and culturally superior to the southern Thracians. In the 1970s Russu's thesis would be seriously shaken by the rehabilitation of Vasile Pârvan's point of view.⁷⁵

In fact, despite Russu's authority, the pre-communist interpretations of Thracian culture and "sublime spirituality" were far from completely suppressed. An interesting figure in this respect, linking the interwar Legionary imageries and the research from the communist period, is Ioan Coman. A theologian and classical philologist, Coman was close to the Iron Guard in the 1930s. He developed the theory of Geto-Dacian monotheism, supported to a certain extent by Pârvan, and interpreted Zalmoxis as well as the Getic priest Dekaineos (Deceneu) as religious reformers who promoted a *praeparatio evangelica*. Yet like a number of other intellectuals with his political sympathies and ideology, he accommodated relatively easily to the communist regime after World War II.⁷⁶ Coman's works were edited not only in Romania but also in Bulgaria, where they shaped to a certain extent the Thracological interpretations: a study of his on Zalmoxis and Orpheus was published in 1950 in a collective volume dedicated to the Bulgarian classical scholar Gavril Katsarov.

73 See Ion Iosif Russu, "Limba română, limbile balcanice și substratul. Elemente autohtone, traco-dace, în limba română," a work from 1962–1963 republished in the 2009 edition of *Limba traco-dacilor* (Bucharest: Dacica). Russu identified about 160 Thracian words in modern Romanian, but many of his etymologies were later contested.

74 Herodotus indicated that "(Ge)Beleizis" was another name of Zalmoxis, but the long "Zalmoxological" literary and scholarly tradition has promoted this figure into a separate god. This treatment is criticized by Dan Dana. The idea that Gebeleizis was a "uranian" god of thunder was already expressed by Wilhelm Tomaschek: Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 248.

75 Pârvan's voluminous monograph was republished in 1982.

76 See Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 315–317.

In this work, Coman clearly treated Zalmoxis and Orpheus as historical personalities, reformers of the Thracian cults who preached faith in one single god and the immortality of the soul. Later they were immortalized and made divine by their followers, the Thracians. In this way, Coman established an implicit analogy between them and Christ: Zalmoxis both preached monotheism and became himself the unique god of the Getae. As a result, Zalmoxis and Orpheus suddenly gain an exceptional spiritual role in European history: they promoted cultural values “among the Thracians, among the Greeks and to a certain extent among all Europeans.”⁷⁷ Coman shows a clear preference for Zalmoxis: he presented the latter as a religious figure and a ruler, a priest-king, who had lived between 1500 and 1200 BCE. Orpheus lived in approximately the same time period and, just like Zalmoxis, he created an all-male initiatic cult. However, as a good Romanian,⁷⁸ Coman saw the figure of Orpheus as secondary to Zalmoxis, who was more ancient and brilliant. Orpheus was only a missionary of Zalmoxis: he only repeated the Zalmoxian reform but “with a mediocre result during his lifetime.”⁷⁹ Thus Coman opposed the point of view of the Romanian historian (of Jewish descent) Carol Blum, who saw the religion of Zalmoxis as Orphic: on the contrary, Coman maintained, the Orphic doctrine was “Zalmoxian.” Quite logically, the Getae, the people of Zalmoxis, are also presented as spiritually and morally superior to the other Thracians.

Coman's rhetoric could be shocking, with its nationalist overtones (the year is 1950!) and *loci communes* taken from the Legionary discourse. He often speaks of “race” (*race thrace*) and describes Zalmoxis and Orpheus in terms that were previously used to glorify the leaders of the Iron Guard and/or Marshal Antonescu: the Thracian “reformers” preached “national unity,” “unlimited patriotism” (*patriotisme sans bornes*), “moderation that calms the instincts,” “a profound religious faith” and so on. In 1958, in another collective volume published in Bulgaria, Coman went even further in identifying Zalmoxis with Christ: the former had also founded a soteriological doctrine through which his followers became divine.⁸⁰ In fact, this focus on Thracian primordality presages the later development of the “Thracomaniac” genre in Romania.

77 (Jean) Ioan Coman, “Zalmoxis et Orphée,” *Serta Kazaroviana. Sbornik Gavril Katsarov. Statii, posveteni po sluchay na sedemdesetgodishninata mu*, vol. 1 (Sofia: BAN, 1950): 177.

78 The apt irony belongs to Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 217.

79 Coman, “Zalmoxis et Orphée,” 183.

80 Jean (Ioan) Coman, “Grégoire de Nazianze et Némésios. Rapports du christianisme et du paganisme dans un poème littéraire du IV^e siècle de notre ère,” in *Studia in honorem Acad. D. Dečev. Izsledvaniya v chest na akad. Dimităr Dechev po sluchay 80-godishninata mu* (Sofia: BAN, 1958), 707–726.

Coman did not remain an exception for long. By the end of the 1960s, historians formerly involved in the Legionary movement were rehabilitated and were allowed to resume publishing. As a result, the historical literature began to sound in many respects like that of the 1930s and the early 1940s. It exalted the Geto-Dacians' "superior" religion and "higher" moral standing, heroic spirit, readiness to sacrifice themselves in struggle, idealism and lack of materialism. The rule of Nicolae Ceaușescu, general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party from 1965 on, completely restored interwar Romanian nationalism. As already noted, the latter was notable for its autochthonism: in the context of Ceaușescu's rule, this aspect was consolidated even further in order to legitimate the autarchic (largely anti-Soviet) character of the regime. The "autochthonous" Thracians/Dacians thus gravitated to the center of the official state politics of history. In general, they gained a much more substantial public presence: suffice it to say that the Romanian automobile whose production started in 1966 was named "Dacia."

In the field of the scholarly research on ancient Thracians, Romania's importance was demonstrated by the fact that, in September 1976, the Second International Congress of Thracian Studies (Thracology) was held in Bucharest.⁸¹ Otherwise, the idea of such congresses came from Bulgaria (where the first congress was held four years earlier) as well as the idea to create specialized institutes of Thracian studies. Also in 1976, an Institute of Thracology was created in the framework of the Romanian Academy of Sciences and brought together archaeologists, linguists and ethnologists. In general it was more "conservative" than the Bulgarian institute of the same name created in 1972. Subjects like Thracian "spirituality" and religion, a favored topic for the Bulgarian Thracologists, were researched in Romania mostly by historians from other academic and university institutions.⁸² Among them were, curiously enough, historians from the Institute of History of the Romanian Communist Party. They abandoned their previous topics, like the workers' movement in the country, and turned to ancient Dacia.⁸³ Similarly, Christian Orthodox theologians started dealing with Dacian religion (a path already followed by Ioan

81 The proceedings were published several years later: *Actes du 11^e Congrès international de thracologie (Bucarest, 4–10 septembre 1976)*, vols. 1–3 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1980).

82 The comparison belongs to Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 338.

83 Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 78. In the same period in Bulgaria, the local Institute of History of the Communist Party redirected its research towards patriotic themes (such as the Macedonian question) in a similar manner.

Coman), considering it a precursor of Christianity, with its doctrine of “resurrection” and of “immortality of the soul.”

However, the interpretations of Thracian “spirituality” put forth, during the 1970s and 1980s, by scholars from Romanian academic circles could not be fully understood without taking into account the massive influence of a Romanian scholar who was not part of these circles. This was the famous historian of religions Mircea Eliade, who, in 1970, published the work *From Zalmoxis to Genghis Khan*, subtitled *A Comparative Study of the Religions and Folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe*.⁸⁴ Eliade’s book was translated and published in Romania ten years later, but its theses were already circulating in local academic milieus.

Eliade’s personality and intellectual heritage is a topic of endless debate in Romania, but also in other countries, such as France and the United States, where he worked for most of his life as a researcher.⁸⁵ In his youth, he was involved into the Iron Guard and was even one of the intellectual “gurus” of the young Legionary intelligentsia. Certainly, Eliade’s spiritual quests were not simple: his interests in yoga and Eastern religions were not typical of straightforward Romanian nationalists from the Iron Guard. Yet his perception of the Eastern esoteric doctrines was certainly adapted to the Romanian “spirituality” in some of his writings.⁸⁶ Eliade left behind several works that reveal quite a nationalist understanding of Romanian history and reflect the mysticism and anti-modernism of the interwar period.⁸⁷ To a large extent, this is the case for *From Zalmoxis to Genghis Khan* as well. Although its subtitle also refers to “Eastern Europe,” the book clearly stresses the Dacian religion and Romanian

84 Initially published in French: Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*. The study was published in English under the title *Zalmoxis, the Vanishing God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972). It must be noted that, between 1938 and 1942, Eliade edited a Paris-based journal of religious studies bearing the title *Zalmoxis. Revue des études religieuses*.

85 The best presentation of his biography and intellectual development is certainly Florin Ţurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le prisonnier de l'histoire* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003). See also the shorter French version of Dana’s *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*: Dan Dana, *Métamorphoses de Mircea Eliade. A partir du motif de Zalmoxis* (Paris: Vrin/EHESS, 2012).

86 See Daniel Dubuisson, “L’ésotérisme fascisant de Mircea Eliade,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 106–107 (1995): 42–51, and the opinionated monograph by the same author, *Impostures et pseudo-science. L’œuvre de Mircea Eliade* (Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2005).

87 For instance, the works of popular history he published during World War II, when he was in diplomatic service in Portugal. Eliade claimed that the Roman conquest did not change Dacia’s ethnic makeup: the Dacians learned Latin but kept their spirituality—in particular, the cult of Zalmoxis, which prepared them perfectly for the later adoption of Christianity. See Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 100.

context.⁸⁸ Otherwise, Eliade's method was based on comparatism and was largely influenced by James Frazer's monumental opus *The Golden Bough* (1890) but also by a series of other concepts, including Carl Gustav Jung's theory of the archetype and the notion of mystery religions supported by Raffaele Pettazzoni, the "father" of the history of religions in Italy.

In the first chapter of the book, Eliade introduced the idea of a Getic/Dacian religion based on initiatic/mystery cults—a theory that would enjoy a bright future in Romanian and, even more, in Bulgarian Thracology. On the basis of (apparently erroneous)⁸⁹ etymological speculations, he derived the Dacian ethnonym from the word for a specific animal: the wolf.⁹⁰ Quite rapidly, without reference to any concrete data, Eliade concluded that this carnivore played a central role in Dacian mythology: young Dacians allegedly underwent rites of military initiation—a kind of *Männerbünde*⁹¹—in which they imitated the wolf pack. Eliade went so far as to perceive some special, predestined connection between Dacians and Romans, as the latter had the genealogical myth of Romulus and Remus, suckled by a she-wolf.⁹²

The second chapter of Eliade's book describes the Dacian religion as an initiation to immortality. Here, the main reference is, of course, the myth of Zalmoxis. His *katabasis* in the underworld is understood as an "initiatic death," and his *epiphaneia* marks the introduction of an eschatological cult based on the belief in immortality. Together with the Hellenist Ivan Linforth,⁹³ Eliade believed that the verb *athanatizein* used by Herodotus in his narrative about Zalmoxis (*Athanatizousi de tonde ton tropon*) should be translated as "to make oneself immortal," not just "to believe in immortality," that is, as a reference to practices and rituals of immortalization. Apart from this initiatic and mystical aspect, the Geto-Dacian religion was of a uranian-solar character: Gebeleizis (Herodotus's alternate name for Zalmoxis) is again taken to be a separate

88 Even Genghis Khan actually marks the beginning of Romanian history, following the long "prehistory" studied by Eliade: he noted that the medieval Romanian principalities appeared after the end of the Mongol invasions (Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, 30), although the connection here is anything but obvious.

89 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 271.

90 See "Les Daces et les loups"—Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, 13–30.

91 The concept of initiatic "closed male associations," or *Männerbünde*, was introduced in 1902 by the ethnologist and historian Heinrich Schurtz.

92 "It is significant that the only people who managed to vanquish definitely the Dacians, who occupied and colonized their land, and who imposed on them its own language, was the Roman people . . ." (Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, 29).

93 Ivan Linforth, "Oi athanatizontes (Herodotus 4.93–96)," *Classical Philology* 13 (1918): 23–33.

celestial god, assimilated with the latter into a syncretic cult. The uranian-solar aspect is proved with the help of discoveries made by Romanian archaeologists: like Constantin and Hadrian Daicoviciu, Eliade believed that the Dacian sanctuaries in Sarmizegetusa and Costești were not covered but were open to the sky. In the round sanctuary of Sarmizegetusa Regia, he discovered a “celestial symbolism” confirmed by the round altar nearby—the “stone (andesite) sun.”⁹⁴

Thus the theory exposed in the first chapters of *From Zalmoxis to Genghis Khan* strangely recalls imageries put forth by “Aryan studies”: initiatic male brotherhoods worshipping solar and celestial gods and sharing a heroic belief in immortality.⁹⁵ Moreover, Eliade saw parallels between the cult of Zalmoxis and Christianity—a link typical of the Legionary mythology in interwar Romania. Yet he did not accept Ioan Coman’s straightforward interpretation of Zalmoxis as a reformer who paved the way for the religion of Christ. Here Eliade’s argumentation is more sophisticated, but it still treads on shaky ground.

This is the reference to the “data” of *folklore*—another crucial aspect of Mircea Eliade’s methodology. Eliade is convinced that “there is enough proof of the survivals of ‘pagan’ heritage, that is, Geto-Dacian and Daco-Roman heritage, in the [folklore of the] Romanians.”⁹⁶ But even this insistence is a modest one: in Eliade’s opinion, folklore—in particular, Romanian folklore—has preserved pre- and protohistoric conceptions of the universe going back as far as the Neolithic period. He frankly stated that the Dacian cult of Zalmoxis and the myths, symbols and rites that constitute Romanian “religious folklore” had roots in a spiritual world that preceded the development of the great civilizations of the Middle East and the Mediterranean.⁹⁷

In *From Zalmoxis to Genghis Khan*, several chapters deal with Romanian popular legends, particularly with two creations of the “poetic genius” of the Romanian people that had already inspired the ethno-philosophy of Lucian

94 Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, 61. Today it is clear that the Dacian sanctuaries were covered: Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 274.

95 Schurtz’s theory was already marked by many stereotypes of “Aryan studies” from his era and would later be used by the Nazis in the ideology of structures such as the SS. See Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 207–217.

96 Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, 73.

97 Ibid., 9. Eliade also believed that the Balkan peoples had common cultural traits that preceded the “Geto-Thracians” and that were pre-Indo-European. The Thracians had allegedly participated in a “proto-historical culture” whose influence rippled through Central Asia and inspired new cultural forms on the shores of the China Sea (ibid., 183–184).

Blaga. These are the ballad “Miorița” and the story about the “Meșterul (Master-builder) Manole,” which are seen by Mircea Eliade as possible rudiments of the Getic “joy to die.”⁹⁸ Eliade regarded Romanian folklore as “superior” to the popular creations in the neighboring (Balkan) countries,⁹⁹ and he discovered in it a “cosmic Christianity” (*christianisme cosmique*) projecting the Christological mystery over all nature.¹⁰⁰ In other works as well, Eliade characterized this “cosmic Christianity” as a primitive/archaic folk religion of Europe, which he tended to contrast with what he called the “historical” (so as not to say “Judaized”) Christianity.¹⁰¹

Today, many aspects of the interpretation Eliade suggested in his 1970 publication can shock, both with their similarity to the Christian Orthodox mythology of the Iron Guard¹⁰² and with their speculative and “initiativ,” rather than strictly scholarly, character. Nevertheless, Eliade’s work became extremely influential in Romania in the later communist era—the 1970s and 1980s—and even more after the fall of communism. His reconstruction of Geto-Dacian “spirituality” was not entirely new—it was partly grounded in Romanian intellectual and scholarly tradition, and it also further reinforced some of that tradition’s elements. For instance, the idea that, in the Daco-Roman/Romanian case, Christianity had a genuinely “popular character,” that it was “natural,” unlike the late and “official” Christianity of the neighboring peoples (such as the Bulgarians and the Hungarians), is still entrenched in Romanian archaeology.¹⁰³ Echoing the exiled Eliade, Romanian ethnologists started

98 Here he referred to an interpretation by the poet and essayist Dan Botta (also an advocate of the interwar fascist ideology), who identified a Thracian background in the two legends: Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, 225–226. “Meșterul Manole” is the Romanian version of a widespread legend existing all over the Balkans, Anatolia and the Caucasus. The plot concerns a master builder who walls his wife into a building (the Monastery of Curtea de Argeș in the Romanian version, the Bridge of Arta in the Greek, etc.) so that it stops crumbling. About “Miorița,” see above.

99 This is specifically the case for the legend of the Meșterul Manole: Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, 185. According to Eliade, the story about Manole contains “a scenario of a primordial myth; primordial as long as it represents a creation of spirit that largely precedes the proto-historical and historical eras of the peoples of Southeast Europe” (*ibid.*, 183).

100 Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, 241.

101 See Dubuisson, “L’ésoterisme fascisant de Mircea Eliade,” 48–50.

102 His study on the legend about the master builder Manole was finished in 1943.

103 See Niculescu (“Archaeology and Nationalism in *The History of the Romanians*,” 156), who explains this insistence on a “popular Christianity” without hierarchy by the absence of any evidence about Church organization on the future Romanian territory outside the Roman Empire.

discovering, one after another, “survivals” from Geto-Dacian cults in Romanian folklore. The idea that the pastoral ballad “Miorița” had a Thracian foundation was practically unquestionable.¹⁰⁴

Mircea Eliade’s influence is visible in reconstructions of the Thracian religion like that of the historian and archaeologist Ion Horațiu Crișan in his 1986 monograph on the “spirituality of Geto-Dacians.” Crișan approached the Geto-Dacian religion through the famous trifunctional scheme of archaic Indo-European society and the pantheon set forth by the French linguist and historian of religion (and Eliade’s “godfather” in the French academic milieu) Georges Dumézil.¹⁰⁵ According to the author, Geto-Dacians had a Great God of uranian-solar type, a Great Goddess of chthonian and agrarian nature and a god of war.¹⁰⁶ In the same era, there was a secret “Zalmoxian” doctrine, reserved for the aristocratic elite and the priests, and centered upon the achievement of immortality through initiatic/mystery rites.¹⁰⁷ Here Dumézil’s trifunctionalism and Eliade’s emphasis on initiatic cults are combined with a certain influence of Bulgarian Thracology that will be discussed later.

Crișan’s work must be put in the context of the 1980s, when the publication of writings on Dacians reached its peak. There was a concrete political motivation behind that: the autochthonist trend of the ideology of Ceaușescu’s regime culminated in 1980, when Romania solemnly commemorated “2,050 years since the foundation of the first centralized and independent Dacian state (*primul stat dac centralizat și independent*) of Burebista.”¹⁰⁸ This is the era when the Getic kings Dromichaetes and Burebista and the Dacian Decebalus formed a holy triad in the narrative about the autochthonous origins. Moreover, they formed a dynasty: paradoxically or not, it was during the communist period that the thesis of a dynastic relationship between the different Getic and Dacian rulers, known from ancient sources, was established. Quite emblematic is the fact that the central axis of the new city center of Bucharest that was built

104 E.g., Paul Tutungiu, “The Thracian Mythical Substratum of ‘Miorița,’” in *Actes du 11^e Congrès international de thracologie* (Bucarest, 4–10 septembre 1976), vol. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1980), 373–379.

105 Dumézil’s vision of “Indo-European society” and mythology was certainly shaped by his sympathies towards extreme-right ideologies like that of Action Française. On Eliade and Dumézil, see the second part of *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, ed. Horst Junginger (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 303–418 (the chapters by Cristiano Grottanelli, Florin Ţurcanu, Eugen Ciurtin and István Keul).

106 Ion Horațiu Crișan, *Spiritualitatea geto-dacilor* (Bucharest: Albatros, 1986), 433–434.

107 Crișan, *Spiritualitatea geto-dacilor*, 386–387; cf. Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 288–289.

108 See Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 78–79.

in the 1980s—the Victory of Socialism Avenue (Victoria Socialismului)—had two main branches: Decebal Boulevard and Burebista Boulevard. Sometimes the archaeological findings were also manipulated by the new construction. For instance, the site of Piatra Neamț-Bâta Doamnei, unearthed in the late 1950s, was “rebuilt” as an impressive fortress to mark the 2,050-year anniversary of the foundation of the “centralized and independent” Dacian state. Yet specialists had already proved by that time that what was initially thought to be defense walls was only supporting walls for terraces.¹⁰⁹

Rigorous scholarship is certainly the last concern of the political use of history: in the context of Ceaușescu’s rule, autochthonism and isolationism went hand-in-hand with historical megalomania. In 1974 a special genre of literature—known as protochronism (*protocronism*)—was launched by the literary critic Edgar Papu.¹¹⁰ According to the protochronist writings, Romanians anticipated many of the great Western inventions. The protochronists likewise discovered a whole set of highly sophisticated ideas in the culture of their “Dacian ancestors.” For instance, they claimed that the “doctrine” of Zalmoxis was a philosophical system that influenced Pythagoreanism, Platonism and other theories. Through “archaeometric” and “archaeo-astronomic” analyses of the structure of Dacian sanctuaries, they discovered an extremely precise “Dacian calendar,” more exact than other ancient calendars. This type of writing was clearly encouraged by the regime, which completely revived the amateur “Thracomania” of Nicolae Densușianu. As early as 1976, the periodical of the Institute of History of the Romanian Communist Party published an article asserting the pre-Latin character of the Dacian language: the Romans were themselves Geto-Dacians who had previously migrated west; Dacia had its own script since the Bronze Age, and so on. The article did not neglect to present Densușianu’s “proof” in that regard: that the Dacians and the Romans on Trajan’s Column speak without interpreters.¹¹¹ Densușianu’s tacit rehabilitation was crowned in 1980, when his *Prehistoric Dacia* was republished in

109 Mihăilescu-Bîrliba, “Impact of Political Ideas in Romanian Archaeology before 1989,” 157–158. Mihăilescu-Bîrliba particularly criticizes the manipulation of ancient history in the publications of Ilie Ceaușescu, an army general, military historian and brother of the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. His writings emphasized the pure and unaltered character of the Romanians as direct descendants of Geto-Dacians, while they treated the Romans as occupiers and oppressors. See also Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 103.

110 On protochronism, see Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*, 167–214.

111 Lucrețiu Mihăilescu-Bîrliba, “Nationalism in Romanian Archaeology up to 1989,” *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica* 3–4 (1996–1997): 162. See also Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 103.

Săptămâna, a protochronist periodical edited by the xenophobic and anti-Semitic writers Eugen Barbu and Corneliu Vadim Tudor.¹¹²

A key figure in the revival of the Thracomaniac genre was Iosif Constantin Drăgan, a Romanian businessman based in Italy. His case reveals much about the ideological evolution of the Romanian communist regime. Drăgan openly held fascist beliefs prior to World War II and had been involved in the Legionary movement. For this reason, after the communists took power, he was barred for some time from returning to Romania. However, not only was this ban later lifted (in the early 1970s), but Drăgan was actually received many times by Nicolae Ceaușescu, head of the Romanian Communist Party and state. The success of Drăgan's business in Italy allowed him to set up the "European Foundation Drăgan" (promoting the values of "European" and "Romanian civilization"), publishing houses, print and electronic media, and even a private university that opened in his hometown after the end of communist rule.¹¹³ Drăgan's foundation sponsored a number of Thracological symposia in Italy and Spain attended by Romanian, Bulgarian and Western European academic scholars. An amateur "historian" himself, Drăgan authored books like *We, the Thracians, and Our Multimillenary History*,¹¹⁴ in which he traced the boundaries of a grandiose ancient Thracian space that occupied all of East and Central Europe, Asia Minor, and parts of Italy and Spain. The self-styled scholar presented the Thracians as Europe's most ancient civilization and Thrace as the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans.

After 1989 Romanian academic scholarship faced serious competition from a boom in Thracomaniac literature. The same ideas were repeatedly expressed in numerous variants. For the experts of the genre, the Geto-Dacians were never Romanized—just the opposite: the Romans were Dacians.¹¹⁵ Thus the imperial majesty of Rome is brought back into the original homeland of

112 After 1989 Barbu and Tudor founded the ultra-nationalist party Greater Romania (*România Mare*).

113 On Drăgan's case: Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 105, 178. Between 1994 and 2004, he also financed the construction, near the town of Orșova on the bank of the Danube, of an immense stone statue of the Dacian king Decebalus (55 meters high). This is the tallest stone sculpture in Europe.

114 This is the English title of the book published in 1976 in Milan by Drăgan's publishing house, Nagard. In the same year the monograph was edited in Romania: Iosif Constantin Drăgan, *Noi, Tracii. Istoria multimilenară a neamului românesc*, vol. 1 (Craiova: Scrisul românesc, 1976).

115 For instance, Gheorghe Iscriu, *Geto-Dacii: Națiunea matcă din spațiul carpato-danubio-balcanic* (Bucharest: Nicolae Bălcescu, 1995). The autochthonist and even anti-Roman attitude of the Thracomaniac movement culminated in the publication of the Romanian-

the Latins. Iosif Constantin Drăgan discovered that at least half of the Roman emperors were of “Thraco-Illyro-Dacian” origin—a “fact” that is certainly not so groundbreaking, as the Romans in general are supposed to have the same origin. The “supreme spirituality” and religion of the Romanian ancestors was especially valued. Some of the recent “researchers” even founded a new “interdisciplinary science” called “Zalmoxology.” It claims to combine history, religion studies, ethnology, studies of folklore, the history of mentalities, and so on.¹¹⁶ Sarmizegetusa Regia, the Dacian “capital,” attracted the interest of all kinds of enthusiasts who named it “the Romanian Stonehenge.” Its great round sanctuary and andesite “solar altar” seem particularly suited for archaeo-astronomical measurements “proving” the sophisticated astronomical knowledge of Dacians who used a specific solar calendar.¹¹⁷

This kind of publication is easy to ridicule. Yet strikingly, in the field of Thracian studies it is often difficult to distinguish between professional scholarship and charlatan myths.¹¹⁸ This problem can be illustrated on many levels and with diverse examples. Sometimes hypotheses from “serious scholarship” nurture Thracomaniac theses, and vice versa. For instance, the idea of a Dacian solar calendar, so exploited in the amateur writings, was first suggested by the professional archaeologist Hadrian Daicoviciu.¹¹⁹ A specific characteristic of the Romanian treatment of the Thracians/Geto-Dacians (incidentally, running counter to the Bulgarian interpretation) is the insistence that these peoples were *literate*. This thesis was established during Ceaușescu’s rule by professionals, including Ion Horațiu Crișan, who indicated that the Geto-Dacians used Greek and Latin script. Yet Crișan also “discovered” Geto-Dacian literature, poetry, astronomy, philosophy, ethics, Geto-Dacian education, Geto-Dacian

American physician Napoleon Săvescu, *We Are Not Descendants of Rome: Noi nu suntem urmașii Romei* (Bucharest: Intact, 2002).

116 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 383.

117 See Iharka Szűcs-Csillik et al., “Case Studies of Archaeoastronomy in Romania,” *Archeologia e Calcolatori* 21 (2010): 325–337.

118 As already mentioned, academic scholars from different countries agreed to participate in the conferences organized by Drăgan’s foundation. Drăgan’s book *Dacia’s Imperial Millennium* was also edited in Bulgarian by Sofia University’s publishing house, and the Bulgarian scholar Alexander Fol wrote an approving foreword (although with slight reservations): Yosif Konstantin Dragan, *Imperskoto hilyadoletie na dunavskite traki* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1992). This was obviously a gesture of gratitude for the conferences in Italy and Spain, which Bulgarian specialists attended as well.

119 See his influential book *Dacia de la Burebista la cucerirea romană* (Cluj: Dacia, 1972). Cf. Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 347.

botanics, physics, technical thought and inventions.¹²⁰ During the 1970s and 1980s, the professional standards of research were obviously contaminated by protochronist imperatives. Recently, the thesis that the Thracians did not have their own script was contested by new publications on the famous Sinaia lead plates (*Tăblițele de la Sinaia*), allegedly discovered in the 1870s during the construction of the Peleş castle and considered by most academic scholars to be modern forgeries.¹²¹ Yet some scholars accepted their authenticity, and others even claimed that the Sumerian alphabet originated from the territory of modern Romania.¹²²

But the boundary between “serious scholarship” and pure speculation is most permeable in the area of Thracian “spirituality” and religion. We need only recall that the cult of Zalmoxis—so often evoked and discussed over the last century or so that it became a real obsession of the Romanian discourse on “national specificity” and of Romanian Thracological research—is not attested to by any archaeological and epigraphical findings.¹²³ Thus there is a good chance that all the “data” about Zalmoxis from the ancient Greek and Latin texts represent a purely literary tradition that grew exclusively out of the short account of Herodotus. At least, this is the main conclusion of the voluminous study on the topic by the Romanian and French scholar Dan Dana. This means that the image of the Getae, who believed in immortality or practiced rites of immortalization (*athanatizantes*), must be seen instead as a figure of the Greek imagination of cultural otherness—as was also recently stated by Romanian classical scholar Zoe Petre.¹²⁴ There is indeed a problem with the scarcity of information on Getic and Dacian religious beliefs. Even if Eliade is

120 Crișan, *Spiritualitatea geto-dacilor*, 286–343.

121 See the book by the engineer Dan Romalo, *Cronică apocrifă pe plăci de plumb?* (Bucharest: Arvin Press, 2003).

122 This is the case for Sorin Paliga of the Department of Slavic Languages at the University of Bucharest. He referred to the Neolithic signs of the Vinča-Turdaș culture, more precisely to the Tărtăria tablets: Sorin Paliga, “The Tablets of Tărtăria—an Enigma? A Reconsideration and Further Perspectives,” *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 19 (1993): 9–43.

123 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 427.

124 Petre, *Practica nemuririi*, 387. However, even as cautious a researcher as Zoe Petre accepts Eliade's theory about the cult of Zalmoxis as initiatic and related to a belief in immortality, and even his idea of initiatic brotherhoods of young soldiers identifying themselves with wolves (*Ibid.*, 276). In the story of Zalmoxis, Petre finds traces of the ancient “Indo-European” belief in immortality reached through magic practices and drinks like the Indian *soma* (*ibid.*, 178). The clichés of “Indo-European” comparative mythology are thus visible in Petre's work as well. Incidentally, it is not clear why the magic potions of immortality should necessarily be “Indo-European”—the word *elixir* is of Arabic origin.

convinced that “as everywhere else in the provinces of the Roman Empire, the autochthonous religious realities survived, more or less transformed, not only the process of Romanization but also that of Christianization,”¹²⁵ there is a surprising lack of data about the Dacian cults in the Roman province of Dacia.¹²⁶

The particular glorification and idealization of Dacians and Getae, “the bravest and the most just of all the Thracians,” in Romanian discourse and scholarship is vulnerable as well. Here it is a question particularly of Pârvan’s belief in the moral and spiritual superiority of the “Geto-Dacian nation” over the other Thracians. The *topoi* used in ancient Greek literature to describe “barbarians” (Scythians, Persians, Carthaginians, Celts, etc.) and abundantly employed for the Thracians (excessive drinking, eating, laziness, promiscuity) are by no means limited to the “southern Thracians,” as Pârvan imagined.¹²⁷ His image of the Getae as a simple peasant people, abhorring excesses, is not necessarily confirmed by the later archaeological discoveries. In the Getic area, archaeologists have found armaments of precious metals and lavish burials dating from the time of the wars between the Getic king Dromichaetes and the Macedonian ruler of Thrace Lysimachus (the beginning of the third century BCE).¹²⁸

Finally, the very idea of Geto-Dacian “national unity,” an anticipation of the Romanian one, is far from being unproblematic. It can be considered a classic case of methodological nationalism, which particularly contaminates the interpretation of archaeological discoveries. Although Romanian archaeologists and historians quickly linked the Dacian fortresses in the southern Transylvanian area (Munții Orăștiei) to the reign of Burebista, this attribution is highly disputable. On the one hand, the latter is unequivocally defined by the sources as a Geta. On the other, his military and political activities were concentrated in the Pontic and Mediterranean zone. This aspect largely puts

125 Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan*, 73.

126 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 275, 291, 353; Sorin Nemeti, *Sincretismul religios în Dacia romană* (Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2005).

127 Emphasized by Petre, *Practica nemuririi*, 177.

128 Petre, *Practica nemuririi*, 192, referring to publications of Alexandru Vulpe. This is the case for the Sveshtari tomb, discovered in 1982 in northeast Bulgaria. On the other hand, the era of Burebista (first century BCE) and Decebalus (the first to the beginning of the second century CE), the “heyday of Geto-Dacian civilization,” is characterized by crude burials, far from the monumentality of the tombs from the fourth to the third century BCE and with a drastic decrease in the number of tombs discovered by archaeologists. Of course, the Romanian specialists tend to explain this fact by citing religious reasons: Valeriu Sîrbu and Gelu Florea, *Les Géo-Daces. Iconographie et imaginaire* (Cluj: Centre d’études transylvaines, 2000), 85.

into question the reconstruction of a “dynastic” continuity between Burebista and Decebalus as well.¹²⁹

Since the late nineteenth century, in the Romanian context, Thracian studies have been expected to give the appropriate answers to a number of questions of “national importance” and to confirm pre-established theses. The ancient Getae and Dacians have been interpreted in terms of unity, autochthony, originality, and moral and spiritual superiority. They were supposed to demonstrate Romanian historical continuity and the right of Bucharest over certain territories, as well as Romanians’ supposed national distinctiveness. Yet despite all these claims, ancient Thracians have served more than just the Romanian cause. Other national ideologies likewise sought to demonstrate spiritual originality, archaic background and the legitimacy of territorial rights by citing this silent ancient people.

From Barbarians to Prehistoric Hellenes: The Ancient Thracians in Modern Greece

“The bright variety of fall’s last colors, the brooks that at frequent intervals streaked the land, the groups of trees and houses that stood picturesquely by their banks, the tombs of the Odrysians rising up here and there like huge, cone-shaped mounds, not only broke up the flat monotony of the plain’s features, but also gave that endless picture an extraordinary, wonderful unity and variety.”¹³⁰ This description of Eastern Thrace’s autumn landscape by the modern Greek writer Georgios Vizyenos would be somewhat cryptic to a broader Greek audience, with its reference to the Odrysian tumuli (*ton Odryson tymvoi*). These are the numerous burial mounds of the mighty Thracian tribe that inhabited this territory in ancient times. Vizyenos, himself a native of the region, was deeply interested in its ancient inhabitants and sought to discover traces of their beliefs and culture in the local popular traditions. He published an important study on the tradition of *Kalogeroi*—the carnival with explicit sexual symbolism performed by masked men before the period of Lent—and its relationship to ancient Dionysian rituals.¹³¹

129 Petre, *Practica nemuririi*, 274–275, 286–287.

130 From Georgios Vizyenos, “The Only Journey of His Life” (1884), translated by William F. Wyatt and published in *My Mother’s Sin and Other Stories* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1988), 180.

131 Georgios Vizyinos, “Oi Kalogeroi kai i latreia tou Dionysou en Thraki,” *Thrakiki Epetiris* 1 (1897): 102–127 (first published in the periodical *Evdomas* in 1888).

However, ancient Thracian culture and its “rudiments” in modern Greek folklore remained a scholarly concern of authors, most of whom came from the region of Thrace, like Vizyenos. The Turkish-Greek and Bulgarian-Greek population exchanges in the 1920s put an end to “Hellenism” in Eastern (Turkish) Thrace and in what in Greece is called Northern Thrace (*Voreia Thraki*)—a term referring to the former Eastern Rumelia, which has been part of Bulgaria since 1885. Since the interwar period, “Greek Thrace” has shrunk to the small Western Thrace—a region with a large Muslim community exempted from the Greek-Turkish population exchange stipulated by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Although a hinterland of imperial Constantinople, a land populated by a numerous Greek community and homeland of important intellectuals, clergymen, and benefactors, Thrace was marginal to the Atheno-centric modern Greek state before part of it was annexed by the latter. But the symbolic shrinking of “Greek Thrace” to the three northeast Greek geographical departments with a tangible presence of Islam, stuck between Turkey and Bulgaria, did not make the region less marginal. A survey of the representation of Greek historical regions on 517 Greek postage stamps finds Thrace in last place: only 2 percent of the stamps bear images from this region. At the same time, its western neighbor, with which it is often associated historically and on an administrative level—Macedonia—is indisputably in first place (24 percent, more than Athens with its 18 percent!).¹³² Today, the amount of Greek scholarly and other literature produced on Thrace certainly cannot compare to the ocean of publications on Macedonia. Moreover, a mere glance at the titles related to Thrace shows that frequently the main subject is the local Muslim population—a sensitive topic in the context of the uneasy Greek-Turkish relations.

And quite understandably, the Odrysians and other Thracian tribes and kingdoms never achieved popularity in modern Greece. Nurtured by European philhellenism, Greek nationalism has, from the beginning, been articulated around the idea of a direct link between ancient and modern Greece.¹³³ Amid

132 Basil Gounaris, “The Politics of Currency: Stamps, Coins, Banknotes, and the Circulation of Modern Greek Tradition,” in *The Usable Past: Greek Metahistories*, eds. Keith Brown and Yannis Hamilakis (Lanham, MD; Boulder, CO; New York; and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), 69–84.

133 Despite the fundamental reference to Orthodox Christianity as well. It would be vain to try to list the publications on the topic. More recent studies include Vassilis Gounaris and Yannis Frangopoulos, “La quête de la nation grecque moderne et le ‘cas grec’ comme un cas paradoxal de la construction du fait national contemporain,” *Socio-anthropologie* 23–24 (2009): 115–153; and the collective volume *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and the Uses of the Past (1797–1896)*, eds. Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

the illustrious achievements of ancient Hellenic civilization, with their fundamental significance to the self-understanding of “European civilization,” the obscure Thracians, who probably did not leave behind a single written text, might simply be difficult to notice. Furthermore, they were unanimously described as “barbarians” by the ancient authors, whose point of view was reproduced in the classicist reading of history by the first modern Greek intellectuals. Thus, when Adamantios Korais rejected the Roman self-designation (*Romaioi/Romioi*) of his compatriots and suggested the “correct” ethnonym (*Graikoi*, according to him), he explained that the Roman throne was often occupied by Thracians and “other such thrice-barbarian rulers (*trisarvarous despotas*)”: Bulgarians, Illyrians, Triballoi and Armenians.¹³⁴ More than eight decades later, Vizyenos was still able to ironize other Greeks’ rejection of “barbarian Thracians” like himself.¹³⁵

In the meantime, modern Greek authors readily attributed Thracian ancestry to their neighboring peoples. The Vlachs and especially the Bulgarians were often associated with the Thracians. For instance, in the late eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, the enlightener Athanasios Psalidas believed that in ancient times the latter were called Thracians.¹³⁶ Thus for a certain time, the term “Thracians” served as a “classicist bridge” between the Greeks and their northern neighbors: these were deemed as close, but also as different, as the ancient Thracians, Dacians and Illyrians were to the ancient Greeks. Terms such as “Thraco-Bulgarians” (*Thrakovoulgaroi*) and even “Thraco-Serbo-Bulgarians” were commonly used until the 1860s.¹³⁷ Similarly, the region of Thrace (just like Macedonia and Epirus) was not universally included in the mappings of the Greek space.¹³⁸

But in the 1870s, the terms “Thracians” and “Bulgarians” were definitively separated from each other. The reason for that was the very advance of Bulgarian nationalism (until then, largely underestimated from a Greek point of view) and, more concretely, the establishment of a Bulgarian Church (the Exarchate) in 1870. The problem was, more precisely, that the latter started claiming

134 Adamantios Korais, *Salpisma polemistirion* (Alexandria, 1801), 8–9.

135 In his poem “To Symvoulion ton Grammateon,” in *Atthides aurai* (1884).

136 Gounaris, *Ta Valkania ton Ellinon*, 39.

137 Ioannis Koliopoulos, *Istoria tis Ellados apo to 1800. To ethnos, i politeia kai i koinonia ton Ellinon*, vol. 1 (Athens: Vaniias, 2000), 77–78; Vasilis Gounaris, “I Makedonia ton Ellinon: Apo to Diafotismo eos ton A' Pankosmio Polemo,” in *Makedonikes tautotites sto hrono. Diepistimonikes prosengiseis*, eds. Ioannis Stefandis, Vlasid Vlasidis and Evangelos Kofos (Athens: Pataki, 2008), 191–192; Gounaris, *Ta Valkania ton Ellinon*, 115, 157.

138 At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was still represented by its medieval name, “Romania”: Gounaris, “I Makedonia ton Ellinon,” 187–188.

Macedonia and Thrace for its diocese—lands considered vital both for the Constantinople Patriarchate's jurisdiction on the Balkans and for the realization of the irredentist Megali Idea of the Hellenic Kingdom.¹³⁹ Since then, the term "Thracians" (*Thrakes*) was reserved for the Greek population of Thrace, covering Greek-speakers but also the segment of the Bulgarian-speaking population that remained affiliated with the Constantinople Patriarchate. It was in this context that Greek ideologists started "rehabilitating" the ancient Thracians and constructing a narrative about the millennia-old Hellenic character of Thrace.

In fact, even before the creation of the Exarchate, the growth of Bulgarian nationalism, as well as of its claims of historical continuity in Thrace, was perceived and resented by Greek intellectuals coming from the region of Philippoupoli/Plovdiv—an area with an urban Greek but predominantly Bulgarian peasant population and with an increasingly significant Bulgarian national movement within the city in the 1850s and 1860s. One of the first Greek authors who left behind works on ancient Thracians was Vlasios Skordelis, a teacher and historian from Stenimachos (today Asenovgrad in Bulgaria, a formerly Greek town not far from Plovdiv).

In 1865 he published his speech *On Thrace*, meant to demonstrate the Greek character of the region since prehistoric times. Skordelis proposed that Hellenes, Thracians, Macedonians, Thesprotians, Illyrians and Pelasgians were "different branches of the same tree" and that Thracians and Greeks were thus united by "the closest possible relationship, or rather the common origin [*i stenotati syngeneia, i mallon, i koini katagogi*]." ¹⁴⁰ According to Skordelis, this relationship is proved by the fact that the Greeks borrowed their music and religion (*thriskeia*) from the Thracians (*Thrakes*). Orpheus, the most important mythical musician and founder of sacred rites and mysteries, was Thracian. He also participated in the expedition of the Argonauts: for Skordelis, all this proved that he was not foreign to the Greeks. The same was the case for Musaeus, Thamyras, Eumolpus and other mythological figures. Skordelis also quoted ancient sources that attested to a Thracian population inside Greece, including in Attica. Conversely, he exposed the importance of the Greek colonization of Thrace—both of the coastlines and, according to Skordelis, the internal territories. He did not forget the data about Greek/Athenian-Thracian

139 On the Megali Idea: see Paschalis Kitromilides, "On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea," in *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, eds. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (London: Ashgate, 1998), 25–33.

140 Vlasios Skordelis, *Peri Thrakis* (Constantinople, 1865), 7, 13.

military alliances and indicated that Thrace finally “assimilated” to the Greek language and culture after Alexander the Great. His conclusion was that the Thracians were as Greek as the Athenians and the Spartans.

Concerning the Thracian tongue (different enough so that ancient Greeks and Thracians used interpreters to communicate), Skordelis thought that it was simply an ancient Pelasgian form of Greek and that its difference from the latter was due to the evolution and the “refinement” of the language among the “more southern Greeks.”¹⁴¹ The language problem logically led the author to address the modern situation in Thrace and the fact that much of the local population spoke not Greek but Bulgarian. Skordelis stated that this fact did not prove the Bulgarian character of the local population, because “language is not always a certain marker of somebody’s ethnic race (*tis ethnotitos phylis tinos*).”¹⁴² The Thracians lost their “mother tongue,” Greek, as a result of foreign oppression, through the endless incursions and robberies launched by the barbarian Bulgarians since the Middle Ages.

In his *Thracian Meditations*, published in 1877 in Leipzig, the same author presented a some information from ancient writers about Thracian tribes (particularly the Odrysians) as well as geographical descriptions of Thrace. This time, Skordelis showed special interest in the ancient Thracian language, especially in the names of Thracian “cities” (*poleis*). He emphasized the Thracian origin of certain second components of designations of inhabited places (*-iskos*, *-bria*, *-[d]iza/-[d]izos*, *-para*) and tried to provide an etymology for them through comparisons with Sanskrit, etc. Nevertheless, this did not lead him to question the “closest relationship” of the Thracians to the Greeks. On the one hand, the latter had imported many cults and gods and music and poetry from the Thracians. On the other, the Thracians were themselves relatives of the prehistoric population of Greece, the Pelasgians.¹⁴³

Put forth by the teacher from Stenimachos, these postulates would enjoy an amazing longevity in Greek scholarship. However, it must be noted that Skordelis did not invent most of these “discoveries”: he quoted Western European, particularly German, authors who had already researched ancient Thrace. For instance, the thesis about the link between Thracians and

¹⁴¹ Skordelis, *Peri Thrakis*, 21–22.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁴³ Vlasios Skordelis, *Meditationes Thracicae. Thrakikai meletai* (Leipzig: Walter Wiegand, 1877), 39–42.

Pelasgians—itself suggested by ancient sources—was already promoted by the German Bernhard Giseke.¹⁴⁴

Identical conclusions were reached at the same time by the Constantinopolitan teacher Iroklis Vasiadis (of Epirote origin). He presented sources on various tribes of ancient Thrace and also asserted their affinity (*syngeneia*) to the Greeks. Just like the latter, the Thracians were descendants of the branch of the Aryans that was called Pelasgians or “Thracio-Pelasgians,” or “Graeco-Italians.”¹⁴⁵ Together with Skordelis, Vasiadis referred to the historian of ancient Greek religion Karl Otfried Müller and to other modern authors who indicated that the Thracians must be identical to Greeks, as it was inconceivable that those who introduced the Muses and mystery cults to Greece—Orpheus, Thamyris, Musaeus and Eumolpus—were foreigners. According to these scholars and to Vasiadis, the cult of Dionysus was also Thracian in origin—a thesis that would soon be “cemented” by the authority of the German classical philologist Erwin Rohde.

However, the Greek authors were not interested in ancient Thrace out of purely scholarly motives. Their primary task was to reject the Bulgarian allegations that appeared in the meantime that the ancient inhabitants of Macedonia and Thrace were not Greek but Slav-Bulgarian. They knew the writings of the revolutionary Georgi Rakovski that dreamed up a “Vedic” ancestry for Bulgarians. And they were especially eager to discredit the publications of the Bosnian Stefan Verković, especially the *Slavic Veda*, a collection of texts that were allegedly popular chants of Bulgarian-speaking Muslims (Pomaks) that evinced a vivid memory of ancient Thracian and Macedonian mythological or historical figures such as Orpheus and Alexander the Great.¹⁴⁶ The Greek polemicists clearly understood the message of these publications: it was not

144 Bernhard Giseke, *Thrakisch-pelasgische Stämme der Balkanhalbinsel und ihre Wanderungen in mythischer Zeit* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1858).

145 Iroklis Vasiadis, *Thrakikos, itoi, peri tis Archaias Thrakis kai ton laon autis* (Constantinople, 1872), 10. In the case of “Graeco-Italians,” Vasiadis referred to Theodor Mommsen’s *History of Rome*, where the German historian tried to demonstrate the close relationship of the Italic peoples to the Greeks.

146 *Veda Slovena(h)*, whose first volume was published in 1874 in Belgrade and the second in 1881 in St. Petersburg. The publication was accepted as authentic by a number of European and Russian scholars. Later it was proved that the volumes contained contemporary forgeries, probably by Verković’s informer, Ivan Gologanov, a Bulgarian teacher from the region of Drama, Macedonia. On Greek reactions, see also Gounaris, *Ta Valkania ton Ellinon*, 261–262. Vasiadis’s work was published before the *Slavic Veda* but after Verković presented in Moscow the first such song—about the “wedding of Orpheus” (1867). This publication triggered the first round of debate.

the Greeks but the Bulgarians from Macedonia and Thrace who were “first,” autochthonous in these lands. Thus they should rule these lands in the future.

Both Skordelis and Vasiadis were especially opposed to the Bulgarian claims.¹⁴⁷ They demonstrated the Greek presence in ancient Thrace, backing up their assertions with quotations from the founder of Thracian archaeology, Frenchman Albert Dumont,¹⁴⁸ who had otherwise accepted the authenticity of the *Slavic Veda*. In 1897 an archaeological study on Thrace was also published by Christos Tsountas, one of the most important Greek archaeologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and a native of Skordelis's hometown (Stenimachos/Asenovgrad).¹⁴⁹

By this time, both this town and Philippoupoli/Plovdiv, as well as a number of Greek centers on the western Black Sea coast, were already part of Bulgaria. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the parts of Thrace that still remained under Ottoman rule witnessed harsh Greek-Bulgarian propaganda competition. It reached its peak after the Balkan Wars and especially after World War I, which led to Thrace changing hands several times. However, the argument asserting Greece's “rights over Thrace” relied mostly on the substantial Greek population in the urban centers of the region, rather than the fuzzy connection between ancient Thracians and Greeks.¹⁵⁰ Mainstream historiography, shaped in the late nineteenth century by Constantine Paparrigopoulos, showed little interest in Thracians. In his famous *History of the Greek Nation* (the first volume of which was published in 1860), the father of modern Greek historiography mentioned the “initial affinity” (*archiki syngeneia*) between Greeks, Thracians and also Illyrians. However, this reference seems extremely short in comparison with the rest of his monumental work.¹⁵¹

Nevertheless, the Greek-Bulgarian debate over modern Thrace certainly catalyzed the scholarly works on the history of the region, including ancient Thrace. The evolution is clear if one compares the first edition of the *History*

147 Vasiadis was also scandalized by Ilarion Makariopolski, the leader of the Bulgarian Church movement, who allegedly told him that Orpheus was an ancestor of the Bulgarians and that ancient Greeks received poetry and music from the Thracians, in other words, from the Bulgarians. See Vasiadis, *Thrakikos*, 14.

148 The archaeological and epigraphic investigations of Albert Dumont in Thrace, published in different periodicals, were collected in *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'épigraphie*, eds. Théophile Homolle and Léon Heuzey (Paris: Thorin, 1892).

149 Christos Tsountas, “I proistoriki Thraki,” *Thrakiki epetiris* (1897).

150 Unlike in the case of Macedonia, where the historical references to ancient Macedonians were always present: see Gounaris, *Ta Valkania ton Ellinon*, 285.

151 Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, *Istoria tou ellinikou ethnous*, vol. 1 (Athens: Pavlidou, 1860), 58–59.

of Paparrigopoulos with the 1932 edition produced by Pavlos Karolidis, Paparrigopoulos's successor at the chair of Greek history at the University of Athens. In the parts of the first volume that he wrote, Karolidis gave Thracians special attention.¹⁵² He treated them as an "Aryan" people related to the Pelasgians—he likewise used the term "Thraco-Pelasgians" (*Thrakopelasgoi*)—and thus to the Greeks as well as to other peoples (Illyrians and Phrygians, and also Albanians and Armenians). Like Skordelis and Vasiadis, he emphasized that the first Greek musicians and poets were Thracians (Orpheus, Musaeus, Thamyris, Eumolpus); the last one was among the founders of the most important mystery cult in ancient Greece—the Eleusinian mysteries—as witnessed by the Eumolpidae, a family of priests at Eleusis. The members of a family of priests in Delphi, the most important oracle of the Hellenic world were called Thrakidae; the orgiastic cult of Dionysus was introduced in Greece by the Thracians; the same was true of the Orphic cults.¹⁵³

In this way, Karolidis connected the Thracians to the most ancient era in Greek history—he discusses them in a preface dedicated to the prehistory of Greece—and particularly to the elements in Greek religion considered the most ancient. Thrace was imagined as the cradle of all sorts of mystery rites and orgiastic cults. In fact, this thesis was not new: it had been reproduced by a number of foreign authors. Following ancient writers such as Plutarch (*Life of Alexander*, 2), Karl Otfried Müller even linked the Greek word *thrēskeia* ("religion," "worship") to the ethnonym *Thrakes/Thrēikes* ("Thracians"): he was simply quoted by Karolidis.¹⁵⁴ The extremely ancient character of the "religion of the Thraco-Pelasgians" was confirmed by the supposed presence of a cult of the Great Mother Goddess—a topic specially discussed by Karolidis. Lastly, the historian attacked the theory that the Thracians were Slavs/Bulgarians and, in particular, the collection of "Orphic chants" published by Verković—the same ones that provoked the indignation of Vasiadis.

Appearing in an edition of Paparrigopoulos's authoritative *History*, these points achieved a certain popularity. But in fact, they were largely inspired by

152 See Pavlos Karolidis, "Eisagogi," in Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, *Istoria tou ellinikou ethnous*, vol. 1, part 1 (Athens: Eleutheroudakis, 1932), 124–133, and Pavlos Karolidis, "Parartima," in Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, *Istoria tou ellinikou ethnous*, vol. 1, part 2 (Athens: Eleutheroudakis, 1932), 420–423.

153 The preserved names of Thracian mythical figures and of Thracian settlements also allegedly prove the Thracian language's close relationship to Greek: Karolidis, "Eisagogi," 48–53. See Karolidis, "Peri Thrakon kai Thrakis," *Thrakika* (1929): 261–264.

154 Georgios Vizyenos declared that Greek religion came from Thrace: Eleni Spathari-Begliti, *Istoriki kai koinoniki laographia Anatolikis Thrakis* (Athens: Livani, 1997), 30.

publications of Greeks from Thrace who were not necessarily professional historians. Since the late 1920s, the idea that Thrace had a Greek identity in ancient times (and, in general, throughout history) has been asserted by the publications of two institutions established by patriotic activists, intellectuals and scholars coming from the parts of Thrace under Bulgarian and Turkish domination. These were the Thracian Center (*Thrakiko kentro*) and the Association for Thracian Studies (*Etaireia thrakikon meleton*), founded in 1927 and in 1937, respectively. The periodicals of these institutions—*Thrakika* and the *Archive of the Thracian Ethnographic and Linguistic Treasure* (*Archeion tou thrakikou laographikou kai glossikou thisavrou*, henceforth cited as *ATHLGTH*)—declared their task to be saving “the soul of Thrace.”¹⁵⁵ To that end they recorded memories of Greek refugees from Thrace and popular chants, published information on Thrace’s archaeology and architecture, and presented the richness of the local dialects and particular folk traditions. Contributors to the two journals were especially concerned about countering claims in Bulgarian publications involving the legitimacy of Sofia’s “rights” to Thrace (including Greek Western Thrace). They felt such claims “twisted” the historical truth.¹⁵⁶

On the pages of *Thrakika*, the history of Thracian Hellenism was researched systematically (and perhaps in the most professional way) by Kosmas Myrtilos Apostolidis, philologist and historian from Philippoupoli/Plovdiv.¹⁵⁷ Among Apostolidis’s interests was ancient Thrace. In his work *On Ancient Thracians* (1928), he dealt with the origin of this Indo-European (or Aryan, according to the terminology of the time) people. Following Giseke and the existing Greek works on “Thraco-Pelasgians,” Apostolidis also concluded that the Thracians, despite their “undoubtedly barbarian” (*anamfisvittos varvara*) mores and habits, were relatives of the Proto-Hellenes.¹⁵⁸ However, Apostolidis did not simply repeat the established theses: he was aware of recent trends in the scholarship on Thracians published abroad (with authors such as Wilhelm Tomaschek and Paul Kretschmer)¹⁵⁹ and introduced a series of new points. He dealt, for instance, with the affinity between Thracians and the Phrygians

155 *Thrakika* (1928): iv, v. In 1992 the two organizations merged.

156 On these polemics: Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands: Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900–1949* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 231–236.

157 He gave special attention to the history of his native city: see his posthumously published book *I tis Philippoupoleos istoria apo ton archaiotaton mechri ton kath’imas chronon* (Athens: Enosis ton apantachou ex Anatolikis Romylias Ellinon, 1959).

158 Kosmas Myrtilos Apostolidis, “Peri ton archaion Thrakon,” *Thrakika* (1928): 81.

159 Tomaschek, *Die Alten Thraker*; Paul Kretschmer, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der griechischen Sprache* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck ja Ruprecht, 1896).

in Asia Minor, with the Thracian “thalassocracy” (prehistoric rule of the sea), with the question of the pre-Indo-European population of Thrace and the influences of Trojan, Mycenaean and other prehistoric “Greek” civilizations over Thracians. He likewise treated the Thracians as “exporters” of religious cults, music and poetry into Greece, as well as of elements of material culture. In fact, Apostolidis referred here to the results of archaeological excavations in Bulgaria and to works of Bulgarian scholars such as Rafail Popov, Gavril Katsarov and Bogdan Filov.

However, the insistence on the close affinity between Thracians and Greeks had to resolve the following paradox, already faced by Paparrigopoulos: many ancient authors indeed indicated a series of Thracian “imports” into Greek religion, but at the same time, the Thracians were depicted as wild barbarians, to whom any kind of culture was foreign. This fact led some German scholars (such as Karl Otfried Müller, Otto Abel and Bernhard Giseke) to distinguish between cultured “prehistoric Thracians” and uncultured “historical Thracians” from the classical and subsequent periods. The paradox was resolved through the theory of Eduard Gerhard¹⁶⁰ and other authors: the “later,” “historical Thracians” were those ancient Pelasgians who preceded the Greeks and whose cultural inventions were adopted by the latter, but who, for some reason, remained on the same cultural level—not developing like the Greeks—or even lapsed back into barbarity. In the same way, Paparrigopoulos believed that the affinity between Thracians and Greeks disappeared as a result of Greece’s cultural development. Apostolidis repeated this point.¹⁶¹

The historian from Philippoupoli also researched the language of the ancient Thracians and suggested an interpretation somewhat more nuanced and more informed in terms of knowledge of the foreign scholarship on the topic than the previous dogmatic indications of the “close affinity” of Thracian and Greek.¹⁶² Echoing authors such as Tomaschek and Kretschmer, he believed that the closest relatives of the Thracian language were Phrygian and Armenian; Apostolidis united them under the term “Thraco-Phrygian family.”¹⁶³ However, a certain patriotic motivation is visible again: Apostolidis’s

160 Eduard Gerhard, *Über Griechenlands Volksstämme und Stammgottheiten* (Berlin, 1853).

161 Apostolidis, “Peri ton archaion Thrakon,” 77–79. Thracians also experienced “barbarian” influences coming from the north, from the west and from Asia: see Apostolidis, “Peri ton ithon kai ethimon ton archaion Thrakon,” *ATHLGTH* 20 (1955): 49–80.

162 Kosmas Myrtilos Apostolidis, “Peri tis glossis ton Thrakon,” *Thrakika* (1932): 181–235, continuation in *Thrakika* (1933): 71–112.

163 Apostolidis, “Peri tis glossis ton Thrakon” (1933), 110. Already Herodotus (*Histories*, vol. 7, 73) had defined the Armenians as “Phrygian colonists.”

basic preoccupation was to reject the special connection of Thracian to Slavic (and Lithuanian) postulated by some European scholars and to reaffirm its special connection to Greek. According to Apostolidis, initially, “Thraco-Phrygian” was closely related to the latter but, over time, the Thracian language became estranged (*apexenothi*) from Greek. A particular problem here was the discovery, in 1912, of the golden ring from Ezerovo, in Bulgaria’s Plovdiv region, written in Greek characters but in an unknown language. The inscription received diverse interpretations and “translations” by Bulgarian linguists who accepted that the language was ancient Thracian.¹⁶⁴ But Kosmas Myrtilos Apostolidis attempted to show that the ring was actually written in a corrupted version of Greek.¹⁶⁵

Apostolidis likewise insisted that the use of Thracian was gradually replaced by Greek during Macedonian rule and that it completely disappeared after the Roman conquest, of course in favor of Greek. In that point, his main purpose was to dismiss the Bulgarian claim that Thracian was still spoken by the time the Slavs arrived in the Balkans. An emblematic example of this was the Bulgarian name of the native city of Apostolidis—Plovdiv. It was a name introduced by Bulgarian activists in the nineteenth century but pretending to be an old Slavic form of Pulpudeva, the Thracian name of Philippoupolis, as attested to by the Roman-Gothic historian Jordanes. Apostolidis did his best to deconstruct this argument in detail.¹⁶⁶

Finally, Kosmas Myrtilos Apostolidis gave special attention to the problems of Thracian religion.¹⁶⁷ He emphasized that the Thracians venerated the same gods as the Hellenes: their deities bore pan-Hellenic names (Apollo, Zeus, Hera, Artemis, etc.) and were, in general, depicted according to Greek iconographic conventions. Thus Apostolidis rejected the thesis, supported by the Bulgarian Gavril Katsarov, that under the Greek names of Thracian gods, one must suppose the existence of purely Thracian deities that have only been identified with their Greek analogues by Greek writers. Apostolidis also dismissed the idea, repeated by Katsarov, that certain epicicles of Greek gods (e.g., Zbelsourdos/Zbelthiourdos in the case of Zeus) were Thracian gods, identified with their Greek counterparts. He attempted to demonstrate that these were nothing more than alternative names.

164 The first attempt at translation belonged to the linguist Dimităr Dechev: Dimitar Detschew, “Die thrakische Inschrift auf dem Goldringe von Ezerovo (Bulgarien),” *Glotta* 7 (1916): 81–86.

165 Apostolidis, “Peri tis glossis ton Thrakon” (1932), 197–223. See also Konstantinos Kourtidis, “I epigraphi tou chrysou daktylidiou tou choriou Ezerovo,” *Thrakika* (1932): 72–83.

166 Apostolidis, “Peri tis glossis ton Thrakon” (1932), 227–231.

167 Kosmas Myrtilos Apostolidis, “Peri tis thriskeias ton Thrakon,” *Thrakika* (1934): 41–59.

Yet Apostolidis was not able to negate completely the existence of Thracian deities whose origin and identity was confirmed by ancient authors. Just like the previous modern Greek scholars, he emphasized that Thracians “exported” a series of gods into the Greek religion, including Dionysus, Bendis and Cotytto. These immediately led him to the recognition of certain traits of the Thracian cults, like the belief in immortality of the Getae, known for their god Zalmoxis.¹⁶⁸ Apostolidis agreed with the common assumption that the most typical trait in Thracian religious practice was the dominance of orgiastic and mystery cults, some of which the Greeks borrowed (such as the Dionysian rites and the Eleusinian mysteries). In this context, he also indicated the presence of the orgiastic “Phrygo-Pelasgian” god Sabazios and of the Great Mother Goddess, the Phrygian Cybele, in Thrace—figures that would assume exceptional importance in Bulgarian Thracology. Apostolidis also researched another Thracian cult that had attracted the attention both of modern Greek authors (since Skordelis) and of foreign archaeologists: the Thracian Horseman/Rider or *Heros*, whose image is found on thousands of funerary or votive reliefs, mostly from the Roman period. To this day, Greek scholars either identify it with Greek gods (such as Apollo) or tend to interpret it as a syncretic Thracio-Hellenic god and refer to the names of Greek deities, mentioned next to the image of the Horseman, the typical Greek iconographic style, and so on.¹⁶⁹ Apostolidis emphasized another important aspect of the cult: it represents the heroization of a dead person, epitomizing Greek religious ideas.¹⁷⁰

In general, his presentation of Thracian religion was ambiguous. On the one hand, Apostolidis emphasized that the Thracians venerated pan-Hellenic gods and tried to demonstrate how their ritual practices recalled Hellenic practices. On the other hand, he admitted the existence of specific traits that, he thought, still survived among the “Hellenized Thracians.” Here Apostolidis quoted the ethnographic research of the writer Georgios Vizyenos on *Kalogeroi*.

Another activist of the Thracian institutes—the ethnographer and medical doctor Konstantinos Kourtidis—also dedicated special attention to ancient Thracian religion. His publications confirmed the image of Thrace as the source of all Greek mystery cults—the Dionysian, the Orphic, the Eleusinian and also

168 In fact, it was a Greek philologist and archaeologist born in Macedonia who wrote the first doctoral dissertation on Zalmoxis: Athanasios Rhusopoulos, *De Zalmoxide secundum veterum auctoritatem* (Göttingen, 1852).

169 E.g., Dimitris Samsaris, *O exellinismos tis Thrakis kata tin elliniki kai romaïki archaiotita* (Thessaloniki: Altintzi, 1980), 219–222.

170 Kosmas Myrtilos Apostolidis, “Peri tou Thrakos Ippeos i tou Kyriou Iroos,” *ATHLGTH* 6 (1939–1940): 17.

of the Cabeiri and the Great Gods venerated in the “Thracian islands” (Lemnos, Samothrace, Imbros) and elsewhere.¹⁷¹ Thanks to such kinds of literature, the image of Thrace as the land of the “Dionysian spirit,” orgiastic rites and mysticism reached a broader audience in Greece. The importance of Orpheus and of Orphism is confirmed by the case of the poet Angelos Sikelianos, who sought inspiration in the esoteric Orphic writings and doctrines.¹⁷²

After World War II, and especially from the 1960s on, the contents of *Thrakika* and of *ATHLGTH* became more outdated, given the development of Thracian studies abroad. The aforementioned main points of interpretation of ancient Thrace were constantly echoed. Authors such as Polydoros Papachristodoulou, founder of the Association for Thracian studies, continued to insist on a “close relationship” of the “Thraco-Phrygian” language to the Greek, its distance from Lithuanian and the Slavic languages (i.e., from Bulgarian, as this was the main concern) and the other traditional postulates.¹⁷³ It must be noted that the Greek Thracian activists and scholars knew and often quoted Bulgarian Thracological literature. Some of them, like Apostolidis, were natives of the Bulgarian part of Thrace. Papachristodoulou (born in Saranda Ekklesies or Lozengrad, today Kırklareli in Turkish Thrace) had studied in a Greek school in Plovdiv.¹⁷⁴

To a certain extent, the professional scholars working on ancient Thrace and who had direct knowledge of Thracian studies abroad also reproduced—and still reproduce—theses from the era of Apostolidis (who died in 1948). In general, they insist on the inclusion of Thracians in the ancient Greek context: not by chance, the Tenth International Congress of Thracology, which was held in 2005 in Greek Thrace (Komotini-Alexandroupoli), was entitled “Thrace in

171 See Konstantinos Kourtidis, *Ta archaia ellinika mystiria, itoi ta Kaveiria—Dionysia—Orphika kai Eleusinia* (Athens: Damianos, 1934). See also Kourtidis, *Istoria tis Thrakis apoton archaiotaton chronon mechri tou 46 m.Ch.* (Athens: Aleuropolou, 1932).

172 Whose spirit he identified as “Doric”: see Takis Dimopoulos, *Sikelianos, o Orphikos* (Athens: Ikaros, 1981); Ritsa Frangou-Kikilia, “O Angelos Sikelianos kai i proaionia orphiki phoni,” *Singrisi / Comparaison* 11 (2000): 100–107. Incidentally, in 1958–1959, in Komotini (Greek Thrace) “Pan-Hellenic Orphic Games” were organized: Michail Martidis, “Panellinioi Orphikoi Panthrakikoi agones stivou,” *Thrakika* (2005–2007): 344–348.

173 Polydoros Papachristodoulou, “I Thrakiki glossa kai oi Slavoi,” *ATHLGTH* 31 (1965): 57–59. See also his study “I Thraki apo ta poly palia chronia,” *ATHLGTH* 32 (1966): 226–403.

174 Sometimes, despite their Greek nationalism, they were able to evaluate the Bulgarian archaeological and other publications in a positive way. See Papachristodoulou’s notice on Thracian tumuli in *ATHLGTH* 17 (1952): 285–287, where he praises the achievements of Bulgarian archaeology.

the Graeco-Roman World.”¹⁷⁵ This perspective is certainly realistic insofar as the historical sources on Thracians are either Greek or Roman—not to mention that many specific characteristics of the Thracian culture known to us may have been invented or interpreted in a specific way by ancient Greek authors. At the same time, Greek cultural influences in Thrace are crucial in many respects. The Greek researchers likewise legitimately stress the study of the Greek colonies in the region. Yet they still repeat a number of problematic points, such as the Thracians’ alleged “ethnic” affinity to Greeks via the obscure prehistoric “Pelasgians.” Some even maintain that the Thracians participated in the “ethnogenesis” of the ancient Greeks.¹⁷⁶ Also debatable is Greek scholars’ insistence on the Thracians’ extremely rapid and complete Hellenization.¹⁷⁷

A good example in this regard is Dimitris Samsaris, a specialist on the Roman period and a participant in conferences and international scholarly committees organized by the Bulgarian Thracologists. In a 1980 monograph dedicated to the Hellenization (*exellinismos*) of Thrace during Greek and Roman antiquity, Samsaris directly reproached the Thracologists in Bulgaria and Romania for neglecting this problem.¹⁷⁸ He focused on the foundation of Greek colonies in Thrace, on the migration of Greeks to the region and on their mixing with the local population, a phenomenon that led to the Thracians’ “loss of ethnic physiognomy.”¹⁷⁹ Samsaris also brought to light the social, commercial and cultural contacts between Thracians and Hellenes; the introduction of Greek institutions, art and religious cults into Thrace; and the linguistic Hellenization of Thracians. Although he presented quite a “barbarian” image of the Thracian way of life, Samsaris also repeated the thesis about the affinity of the Thracian language to Greek (and to Pelasgian).¹⁸⁰ In fact, in the meantime the link between Pelasgians and Thracians was confirmed by the great

175 See the proceedings: *I Thraki ston Ellino-Romaïko kosmo. Thrace in the Graeco-Roman World* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2007).

176 Vasiliki Papoulia, “Phaseis entaxeos archaion phylon tis Chersonisou tou Aimou ston elliniko kosmo,” in *I istoriki, archaiologiki kai laographiki ereuna gia ti Thraki* (Thessaloniki: IMCHA, 1988), 209.

177 Concerning the complex question about the Hellenization of Thracians in the Aegean and Pontic area, and its treatment by Greek archaeology, see Alexandre Baralis, “Hellénisation et déshellénisation dans l’espace pontique: le passé antique à l’épreuve des constructions identitaires modernes,” in *Les stéréotypes dans les processus d’hellénisation et de romanisation*, eds. Rosa Plana and Hélène Ménard (Montpellier, forthcoming).

178 Samsaris, *O exellinismos tis Thrakis*, 7–8.

179 Ibid., 113.

180 Ibid., 20.

authority of Michail (Michel) Sakellariou in his works on the “pre-Hellenic” and “proto-Greek” populations in Greece.¹⁸¹

Concerning the properly archaeological interest in Thrace, it must be noted that the latter traditionally occupied only a marginal place in Greek archaeology. Tellingly, the region obtained an autonomous archaeological service (*ephoria*) only in 1962.¹⁸² And, of course, the research was concentrated from the outset on the Aegean coastal area—in the ancient Greek colonies (Abdera, Maroneia, Zōnē). For a long time, the hinterland did not interest the Greek archaeologists. The same was true of the traces of settlements predating the Hellenic presence on the littoral, which were classified simply as “prehistoric.” It was only in the 1970s that the situation changed thanks to the activity of Diamantis Triantaphyllos—and, to a large extent, under the impact of the development of Thracian studies in Bulgaria.¹⁸³ While many specialists, such as Georgios Bakalakis, preferred to keep on ignoring the Thracian presence, Triantaphyllos and other researchers gave special attention to questions that preoccupied their Bulgarian colleagues (such as megaliths and local Thracian “sanctuaries”).

It must be noted nevertheless that the evolution of classical studies compelled a certain revision of traditional postulates that actually *confirmed* the legitimacy of the Helleno-centric point of view. For instance, Dionysus is no longer treated as a Thracian deity imported in Greece but as a Greek god, as his name was meanwhile discovered on Mycenaean tablets with Linear B.¹⁸⁴ More recent works of Greek authors underline the Hellenic origin of the figure of Orpheus and of the Orphic doctrines.¹⁸⁵ Here, a possible reason for this emphasis is the active exploitation of both Orpheus and Orphism as well as of Dionysus in Bulgarian Thracian studies. Thus the reference to Thracian specificities in ancient religion became largely useless for the cause of Greek national ideology, despite its relative importance in previous writings. Even

181 See, in particular, Michel Sakellariou, *Peuples préhelléniques d'origine indo-européenne* (Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon, 1977), where he traced the migrations of Pelasgians into the Greek peninsula from Thrace and asserted that the “real” Pelasgian was related mostly to the Thracian language (291–292).

182 On Thracian archaeology in Greece, see Alexandre Baralis, “La protohistoire de la Thrace. Enjeux identitaires et territoriaux,” in *Ecrire le passé: la fabrique de la préhistoire et de l'histoire à travers les siècles*, ed. Sophie de Beaune (Paris: CNRS, 2010), specifically pages 106–108, as well as Alexandre Baralis, “Hellénisation et déshellénisation.”

183 Baralis, “La protohistoire de la Thrace,” 107.

184 See Samsaris, *O exellinismos tis Thrakis*, 204.

185 Evangelia Marangianou-Dermousi, “O Orpheas sti Thraki,” *Thrakika* (1991–1992): 157–173.

so, Thrace sometimes still retains a mysterious and esoteric aura in the popular Greek imagination.¹⁸⁶

In any case, unlike the Romanian and (as we shall see) the Bulgarian authors, the Greek researchers never speculated about some specific Thracian spirituality and even less about a Thracian political genius, Thracian “empires,” and the like. They instead followed interpretations set forth since the mid-nineteenth century by modern Western authors, treating Thracian culture as extremely archaic, orgiastic and so on. Thus the Greek studies of “Orphism” are based on European classical scholars and, in general, do not add new interpretations.¹⁸⁷ The reason for this difference is clear: while the Romanian authors sought in Thracian (Geto-Dacian) spirituality the sources of “national distinctiveness,” their Greek colleagues instead tried to include the specifically Thracian elements in the richness and variety of ancient Greek culture. The Hellenic heritage of Thrace is certainly not to be neglected either: Greek scholars did not feel a particular need to invent, for example, some special Thracian philosophy, since they could simply refer to such an important figure in the history of philosophy and science as Democritus (born in Abdera, a Greek colony on the Aegean Thracian coast). The University of Thrace, established in 1973, bears his name.

Hence, if one excludes the publications of modern Greek authors from Thrace—more precisely, of those from the refugee organizations—ancient Thracians never constituted a primary topic of research in Greece. Nevertheless, in some contexts, ancient Thrace appeared to hold important stakes for Greek national ideology. The main context of this type is the field of ethnography and the studies of folklore—or, as it is known in Greek, *laographia*.

Since the very beginning, modern Greek ethnography was expected to provide evidence of the historical continuity between ancient and modern Hellenism, against the pernicious denials of such continuity by the Tyrolean historian Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer. The link was supposed to reside in Greek folklore—in the “primitive” popular culture and, more precisely, in the forms of “popular worship” (*laiki thriskeia*). These had allegedly preserved traces and “survivals” (*epivioseis*) from ancient cults that were otherwise suppressed by

186 Curiously enough, an album of four CDs containing Greek songs from “Eastern Rumelia,” that is, from what is now southern Bulgaria, and released in 2008 bears the title *Apo ti Thraki tou Orpheia kai tou Dionysou* (“From the Thrace of Orpheus and Dionysus”).

187 See, for instance, Eleni Boliaki, “O Orphismos kai i tychi tis psychis meta to thanato,” *Thrakika* (2005–2007): 216–236. On the alleged relationship between Orphism and Christianity: Konstantinos Tsopanis, *Orphismos kai Christianismos* (Athens: Iamvlichos, 2003).

Christianity.¹⁸⁸ The rich folklore of Thrace played an important role in this respect. Since the late nineteenth century, a number of Thracian popular customs were included in the repertoire of traditions “demonstrating” the link between modern and ancient Greeks.

Two customs in particular were emphasized: the aforementioned masquerade on the eve of the Orthodox Great Lent (known by a variety of names—Kalogeroi/Kalogeros, Koukeroi, Kiopek Beis, etc.);¹⁸⁹ and the striking firewalking dance, called the Anastenaria and performed in the Strantzha Mountains (Bulgarian: Strandzha, Turkish: Yıldız Dağları), mostly on the church holiday of Sts. Constantine and Helen (May 21). These rituals were seen as “living remnants” (*zontana leipsana*) of the Dionysian cult—a thesis reinforced by the premise that Dionysus was a Thracian god *par excellence* who was adopted by ancient Greeks.

The discovery of the “Dionysian” background of the Thracian folk customs started in 1873 with a work by Anastasios Chourmouziadis, professor of theology at the Phanar College of the Constantinople Patriarchate (*Megali tou Genous Scholi*).¹⁹⁰ He was actually asked by the Patriarch to investigate and write a report revealing the “true” nature of the Anastenaria: the dance on red-hot coals was denounced by the Church as a practice inspired by satanic

188 On *laographia* and, in particular, on Nikolaos Politis, the father of the discipline: Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece* (New York: Pella, 1986). On Politis’s theory of the “survivals” from ancient Greek culture: *ibid.*, 102–105. See also Loring Danforth, “The Ideological Context of the Search for Continuities in Greek Culture,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 2 (1984): 53–85.

189 The rite exists in the Balkans in various versions that evolved over time, even during the period in which they were observed by ethnographers. In general, it is performed on the eve of the Orthodox Great Lent, more precisely on what is called Cheese Monday (*Tyrini Deftera*)—a week before the beginning of the fast—but it can also be celebrated between Christmas and Epiphany. A variety of fur masks and bells are used by the participants. There are a number of protagonists: men with a range of roles—*kalogeros*, “king” (*vasilias*); “girls” (*koritsia*—roles played by unmarried men); an “old woman” (*Babo*, again performed by a man); “Gypsies”; “policemen” (*zaptiedes*—from the Ottoman *Zaptıye*), and others. The performance itself follows a series of moments: procession and visit to houses, dance in an open space, ploughing, “marriage,” “death,” “resurrection,” etc. It also involves obscene pantomimes and a wooden phallus. For a description of the diverse versions of the custom in Eastern and Northern Thrace and a survey of the literature on it, see Manolis Varvounis, *Laïkes thriskeftikes teletourgies stin Anatoliki kai ti Voreia Thraki* (Athens: Poreia, 2010), 87–98. Varvounis is cautious about the origin of the custom and believes that it has incorporated “numerous cultural layers.”

190 Anastasios Chourmouziadis, *Peri ton Anastenarion kai allon tinon paradoxon ethimon kai prolipseon* (Constantinople, 1873).

possession. Chourmouziadis never visited the villages in which the rite was performed, and his report was based on information from priests who had served in those villages. Nevertheless, he felt able to interpret the Anastenaria as superficially Christianized Dionysian “orgies.”

Chourmouziadis believed there were many parallels between the Anastenaria and the ancient Bacchic and Maenadic possessions: the enthusiasm and the ecstasy; the sacrifice of a bull during the Anastenaria and the role of the bull in the myths and the worship of Dionysus; the distribution of raw meat after the sacrifice and the alleged Bacchic practices of *omophagia* (eating of raw flesh); the carrying of an icon by the *anastenarides* (the participants in the dance) and of idols in the ancient processions. Even the exclamations the Strantzia peasants made when dancing over hot coals (*a! eh! ouh! ih!*) were interpreted as invocations of Bacchus.¹⁹¹

These analogies are certainly problematic: suffice it to say that the meat distributed during the Anastenaria is cooked and not consumed raw.¹⁹² And, most of all, there is no information whatsoever about firewalking during the Dionysian festivities. However, Chourmouziadis backed up his argument by linking the Anastenaria to another “Dionysian” rite—namely, to the Koukerioi (Kalogeroi)—as well as to a series of other customs and “superstitions.” In general, Chourmouziadis’s work had a dual aim. He condemned the obscure “pagan” traditions that contradicted the doctrines of the “Mother Church.” Yet at the same time he deemed them useful, as they represented living proofs of continuity with ancient Greece that could be used against the assertions of Fallmerayer. Instead of punishing them, the Church simply needed to “educate” and to “enlighten” the people performing these rituals.

The link between the Kalogeros and the ancient Dionysian festivals was soon confirmed by Georgios Vizyenos and even more convincingly by the British archaeologist Richard Dawkins. Inspired by Vizyenos’s article, Dawkins traveled to the area of Vizyi/Vize in Eastern Thrace to witness the rite in person.¹⁹³ Dawkins indicated aspects that, in his opinion, proved that the

191 Chourmouziadis, *Peri ton Anastenarion*, reprinted in *ATHLGTH* 26 (1961): 143–167.

192 See Dimitris Xygalatas, “Ethnography, Historiography, and the Making of History in the Tradition of the Anastenaria,” *History and Anthropology* 22 (2011), 62. For a critique of the ethnographic interpretation of ritual sacrifices in Greek folk traditions through ancient Greek cult practices: Stella Georgoudi, “L’égorgement sanctifié en Grèce moderne: les *Kourbania* des saints,” in *La cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec*, eds. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 271–307 (specifically on Anastenaria: 303).

193 Richard Dawkins, “The Modern Carnival in Thrace and the Cult of Dionysus,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 26 (1906): 191–206.

custom was a “survival of the worship of Dionysus.” These included the *phal-lophoria*; the use of a cradle with a “child” that recalls the *liknon* in Dionysian festivals; and the ritual death of the Kalogeros that re-enacts the murder of the young Dionysus by the Titans, who were smiths just like the Gypsies in the modern folk custom.¹⁹⁴

In the interwar period, scholarly interest towards the Anastenaria and Kalogeros grew. Thus in his annex to the first volume of Paparrigopoulos's *History*, Pavlos Karolidis referred to a peculiar survival of “the orgiastic cult of Dionysus.” “In some places of Thrace are kept nowadays some orgiastic celebrations of Easter (*sic: orgiastikoi tines eortasmoi tou Pascha*) called *anastenamia* [*sic*], probably remnants of the ancient Thracian orgiastic rituals.”¹⁹⁵ The research on these “survivals” was especially catalyzed by the fact that Bulgarian scholars discovered similar rituals and started publicizing them among the European scholarly community. More precisely, the Bulgarian folklorist Mihail Arnaudov did so in his publications.

In reality, two details compromised the “purely Greek” character of the Thracian folk customs. First, the Anastenaria was (and is) performed not only by Greeks but also by Bulgarians from the Strantzha/Strandzha region. Second, the pre-Lent carnival is a tradition known not only to Greeks and Bulgarians but all over Europe, as well as in former European colonies on other continents. Moreover, in many cases, the accessories employed by the participants (fur masks, bells, wooden phalluses) seem strikingly similar (in the *Busójárás* among the Croats of southern Hungary, the *Kurentovanje* in Slovenia, the *Tschuggätta* in Switzerland and plenty of other customs in the Alpine area).¹⁹⁶ And, ironically, the “Dionysian tradition” often has foreign names under which it is celebrated by Greeks as well. These are names of Turkish or Arabic-Turkish (*Tzamala/Djamala*, *Bey*, *Köpek Bey*, *Arapides*, *Yenitsaroi/Yeniçeri*) or Slavic/Bulgarian origin (*Startsi*).

The connection between the two rituals is not obvious either. There are few common elements between the Anastenaria and Kalogeros: the most striking ones—the masquerade and the obscene symbolism (in the case of the latter) and the firewalking related to a pious veneration of Christian symbols (in

194 It is possible that the British archaeologist mixed up Titans and Cyclops: it was the latter who were smiths.

195 Karolidis, “Parartima,” 422. On the Kalogeros (Kiopek Beis) performed in the area of Adrianople: Polydoros Papachristodoulou, “Symmikta laographika Adrianoupoleos,” *Thrakika* (1929): 429–430.

196 See Gerald Creed, *Masquerade and Postsocialism: Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 18.

the case of the former)—are certainly not common. Indeed, the rituals were often practiced by inhabitants of the same villages, like the famous Kosti in the Strandzha Mountains, but the area of diffusion of the carnival before Lent is incomparably bigger than that of the firewalking.

Aware of some of these problems, the archaeologist Konstantinos Romaïos dedicated a long study to both rituals¹⁹⁷ in which he concluded that they have preserved an extremely ancient worldview from a cultural period that is older than the classical Greek religion. He saw them as remnants of a prehistoric worship of the elements of nature and of spiritual forces. Only in historical times did these kinds of worship take the form of Dionysian rites. The insistence that the Anastenaria was so archaic—that its worldview preceded the Hellenic gods—actually “internationalized” the custom. Romaïos indicated the existence of similar rites in India, Japan, the Pacific and elsewhere. Yet he did not neglect his patriotic duties. Romaïos insisted that the Anastenaria (and the pre-Lent carnival) were of purely Greek/Greek-Thracian origin—he asserted that the Bulgarians took them from the Greeks.

Yet Chourmouziadis’s work remained the prism through which most of the authors continued to interpret the Anastenaria. Just like Chourmouziadis, they had never attended the ritual either. Thus a number of clichés were constantly repeated: the pious veneration of the Christian saints Constantine and Helen was frequently described as an “orgy.” But, surprisingly or not, even ethnographers who attended the custom were unable to reconsider the dominant interpretative framework. It was largely the national interest that tended to restore the purely “Dionysian” interpretation. Thus the main figure within the Association for Thracian Studies, Polydoros Papachristodoulou, reasserted the “ecstatic” and “orgiastic” aspects of the Anastenaria as “a Christianized Dionysian ritual” where the place of Dionysus is taken by Saint Constantine.¹⁹⁸ Papachristodoulou clearly saw research on the firewalking as a national cause.¹⁹⁹

197 Konstantinos Romaïos, “Laïkes latreies tis Thrakis. Anastenaria. Teleti tis Tyrinis Defteras,” *ATHLGTH* 11 (1944–1945): 1–130.

198 Polydoros Papachristodoulou, “T’Anastenaria, oi Kalogeroi, Seïmenides k’oi Piterades,” *ATHLGTH* 15 (1950): 263–367.

199 And he formulated his belief with shocking candor: “Now, when the study of Mr. K. Romaïos brought the custom on the international stage and demonstrated it as an extremely ancient and very important tradition, connected to all the similar customs in the world, it would be a shame not to exploit it (*na mi to ekmetalleuthoume*), at least from a national viewpoint, as its existence confirms the presence of Hellenism in Thrace for about three thousand years. The Bulgarians exploit such important phenomena, and very rightly so” (Papachristodoulou, “T’Anastenaria,” 309).

Each year, throughout the 1950s, Papachristodoulou provided observations and “new data” in the *ATHLGTH* from the Anastenaria performed by former Thracian refugees residing in Greek Macedonia (in the town of Langadas near Thessaloniki and in villages such as Agia Eleni in the department of Serres and Mavrolefki in the department of Drama).²⁰⁰ But in fact, these articles did not modify the established interpretation at all. The same was true of the pre-Lent carnival, which was clearly interpreted as a presentation of the “Orphic” myth about the death of the young Dionysus-Zagreus, dismembered by the Titans. Similarly, one of the protagonists in the custom—the “Gypsy woman” (*katsivela*)—was identified with the Thracian orgiastic goddess Cotytto.²⁰¹ Even the fact that the *anastenarides* were often reluctant to speak about their rite was seen as similar to the obligation of the participants in ancient Greek mysteries to keep them secret.²⁰² The “Dionysian” reading of the Anastenaria and of the carnival custom was further consecrated by Georgios Megas, a leading Greek ethnographer, a native of Mesimvria (Nesebăr) on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, and a staunch defender of many “purely Greek” traditions against Bulgarian attempts to appropriate them.²⁰³

A more elaborate version of the same reading was suggested in 1963 by the doctoral dissertation of the ethnographer and theatrologist Katerina Kakouri.²⁰⁴ Her work was immediately translated into English and was followed by two documentary films that Kakouri consulted on and were to be used in anthropology classes at the University of California (Berkeley). All this explains the popularity of her ideas abroad (particularly in Bulgaria). On the one hand, Kakouri

200 Polydoros Papachristodoulou, “T’Anastenaria apo nea stoicheia tou 1952 (Maïou 21),” *ATHLGTH* 18 (1953): 131–178; Polydoros Papachristodoulou, “Simeiomata kai paratiriseis stin telesi ton Anastenarion 1952 kai 1953 sto Langada Thessalonikis,” *ibid.*, 305–320, etc.

201 Grigorios Euthymiou, “O Kiopek Beis Didymoteichou,” *ATHLGTH* 19 (1954): 153–160.

202 See Eleni Boliaki, *To dionysiako (;) Anastenari. Ermineies kai parermineies* (Athens: Pataki, 2011), 123. The *anastenarides* have been persecuted by the Church (as Chourmouziadis’s case shows)—a fact that certainly explains their lack of confidence in “foreign people,” including ethnographers: see Xygalatas, “Ethnography, Historiography, and the Making of History,” 67–71.

203 Georgios Megas, “Anastenaria kai ethima tis Tyrinis Defteras eis to Kosti kai ta perix autou choriou tis Anatolikis Thrakis,” *Laographia* 19 (1960–1961): 472–534. Later, Megas rejected his own interpretation of Anastenaria through Dionysian mysticism and suggested that the custom had a purely Christian character. In this case, his aim was to protect it from persecution by the Orthodox Church. See Boliaki, *To dionysiako (;) Anastenari*, 130.

204 Katerina Kakouri, *Dionysiaka: Ek tis simerinis laikis latreias ton Thrakon* (Athens: Ideotheatron, 1999) (new edition). English edition: *Dionysiaka: Aspects of the Popular Thracian Religion of Today* (Athens: Eleftheroudakis, 1965).

reproduced and enriched the analogical method of the previous scholars with a series of “similarities” between aspects of Thracian folk customs and ancient Dionysian worship. According to her, it had an uninterrupted continuity in Thrace: Kakouri referred to the *anastenarides* as “Bacchants” or “Bacchant-Christians.” On the other hand, the author discovered that the Dionysian and the Orthodox Christian elements of the Anastenaria were blended with heretic influences. She referred to medieval sects such as the Paulicians and the Bogomils, although the iconolatry of the *anastenarides* clearly contradicts the aniconic character of these doctrines.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Kakouri thought that heretic communities from Asia Minor had settled in Thrace and brought their cult of sun and fire, Zoroastrian in origin, and thus maintained the existing mystic and enthusiastic traditions in Thrace.

To a certain extent, the last thesis contradicts the very idea that the ritual firewalking has Thracian and Dionysian roots. But it was obviously seen as a necessary link to the only geographically “close” case of firewalking, described by ancient sources. One sentence in Strabo’s *Geography* refers to a similar practice in the sanctuary of Artemis Perasia in the south of Asia Minor (Cilicia).²⁰⁶ Given the fact that the Dionysian cult did not include such a practice, and taking into account the cult of fire in Zoroastrianism, the Persian influence through Asia Minor seemed a necessary premise. It was suggested by Konstantinos Romaïos. A sentence from Macrobius also provided the link between Dionysus and the solar/fire cult: according to the Roman historian from the early fifth century CE (*Saturnalia* I, 18, 11), the Thracians identified Dionysus, Sabazios and the Sun as one deity.²⁰⁷

Thus the “Dionysian key” of the interpretation of the Anastenaria was enriched with diverse additional aspects: Persian fire cult, solar cult, Mithraic and heretic dualism, and even shamanism.²⁰⁸ Eventually, this led to questions

205 Firewalking rites have not been documented among them either, even if Paulicians retained their community in Thrace—in Philippoupolis (Plovdiv). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they converted to Catholicism. See the critical assessment of Boliaki, *To dionysiako* (;) *Anastenari*, 133–135.

206 “At Castabala is the temple of the Perasian Artemis, where the priestesses, it is said, walk with naked feet over hot embers without pain” (Strabo, *Geography* 12, 2, 7, translated by H.L. Jones).

207 Cited by Apostolidis, “Peri tis thriskeias ton Thrakon,” 51.

208 The various (mis)understandings of the rite are analyzed in detail by Boliaki, *To dionysiako* (;) *Anastenari*. In his recent voluminous monograph on folk religion in Eastern and Northern Thrace, ethnographer Manolis Varvounis also supposes that the rite has a pre-Christian heliolatric basis, visible in its ecstatic aspect and in the role of the ritual “non-burning” fire: Varvounis, *Laïkes thriskeftikes teletourgies*, 102–110.

about whether the custom was “Dionysian” at all. The most representative example here is the writer and ethnographer Maria Michail-Dede, author of a series of publications on the Anastenaria based on fieldwork in the 1970s.²⁰⁹ However, her “methodology” is no less traditionalist than that of the previous authors, and in some cases, her rhetoric is even more nationalist.²¹⁰ Although Michail-Dede disagreed with the theory about the Dionysian origin of the rite, she followed the conventional path leading to ancient Greek “roots.” Suddenly, the Anastenaria appeared to show the manly and heroic nature of the ancient Thracians and, in general, of the ancient Greeks. The register of the interpretation is at the same time Christian Orthodox: for Michail-Dede, the Anastenaria is an ancient heroic competition (*agon*) that was Christianized and adapted to the cult of the sainted emperor-warrior Constantine.²¹¹

Obviously, the Greek “laographic” approach to Thracian folk customs was unable to abandon the patriotic search for ancient Greek archetypes, even when it abandoned the reference to “the Thracian” god Dionysus. Yet despite all the interpretations put forth by modern studies linking it to ancient Thracian, Greek and other cults, the earliest records of the Anastenaria are strikingly recent. There are no accounts of the firewalking custom between antiquity and the nineteenth century—if one accepts Strabo’s description of Artemis’s

209 See Maria Michail-Dede, “To Anastenari,” *Thrakika* (1972–1973): 23–178. See also Maria Michail-Dede, “Ta tragoudia kai oi choroï ton anastenaridon,” *Thrakika* (1978): 75–129; Maria Michail-Dede, “Anastenari (I Drosia tis Fotias),” *Thrakika* (1988–1990): 41–152.

210 According to her, those who do not speak Greek language cannot understand the rite. The same goes for those who do not know the mentality and the psychological structure (*psychosynthesi*) of the uprooted (*xerizomenon*) Hellenes. Furthermore, and “most important,” the custom cannot be understood by those who do not know “the triptych—religion, fatherland, family—that dominates the psychological structure and the mentality of [the way of] life in the Greek [ethnic] space.” (Michail-Dede, “To Anastenari,” 26). As Dimitris Xygalatas points out, the “triptych” in question is actually the motto of the Regime of the Colonels in Greece, whose rule took place during the time Michail-Dede was writing: Xygalatas, “Ethnography, Historiography, and the Making of History,” 65.

211 In her ethnographic observation of Kalogeros, she also criticized the theory about its direct continuity from the Dionysian processions: Maria Michail-Dede, “O ‘Kalogeros’ stin Agia Eleni Serron,” *Thrakika* (1979): 93–126. Apparently, from her patriotic and even “militaristic” perspective, Michail-Dede attempted to purify the Greek popular traditions of orgiastic “immorality.” She approached the carnival from a traditional “naturalist” point of view: as a rite designed to make the earth fertile and thus related to the cycle of the seasons. As such, Kalogeros expressed a kind of social philosophy linking Man and Nature through the cycle of birth, life and death: Michail-Dede perceived here an “archaic thinking” (*archaiki skepsi*) that influenced the philosophy of Heraclitus.

sanctuary in Cilicia as having anything to do with Thrace at all.²¹² This fact is certainly surprising for such an “ancient” custom, given how close the area is to important administrative and ecclesiastic centers such as Adrianople, as well as to the most important one—Constantinople.²¹³

The exploitation of the mysterious (in origin) Anastenaria and of the rather banal (on a European scale) Kalogeroi recalls the uses of folklore in Romanian (and Bulgarian) Thracology. Scholars in these countries have sought to find elements of the “folk traditions” that could demonstrate an age-old cultural continuity and also autochthony on a certain territory. The last aspect was directed against the claims of neighboring nations regarding the same territories. Yet despite all its problematic features, in the Greek case, the research on ancient Thracians did not evolve into something similar to the Romanian “Thracomania.” The reason is clear: although deemed “Pelasgian brothers,” the ancient Thracians never became the quintessential “ancestors” of modern Greeks. Respectively, the political uses of antiquity and the dilettantish works were focused on ancient Greeks as well as on the highly politicized ancient Macedonians. At the same time, the absence of “Thracomania” did not prevent Greek Thracian studies from inept and anachronistic usage. The issue here is, more precisely, of a certain “ethnogenetic” and “racial” theory about the 20,000–40,000 Slavic-language-speaking Muslims living in Greek Western Thrace and known as Pomaks (*Pomakoi*).

At first glance, the Greek interest in the Pomaks could seem paradoxical. Slav-/Bulgarian-speakers and, at the same time, Muslims, the Pomaks do not fill either of the standard criteria for “Greekness”—unlike, for instance, the Karamanlides from Asia Minor, who were Turkish-speaking but Orthodox

212 Greek scholars were able to exploit one alleged “source” about Anastenaria in the Middle Ages—a short mention of some people, “obsessed by demons” (*daimonoliptous*) and called “Asthenaria,” in an anonymous account about the Vlacho-Bulgarian rebellion of Asen and Petăr in Moesia (Northern Bulgaria) in 1185. See Romaïos, “*Laïkes latreies tis Thrakis*,” 25. Even if the “possession by demons” in this case (contrasting with the pious Christianity of the *anastenarides*) can be treated as a stigmatization by the official Church, similarly to its numerous reactions since the nineteenth century, no firewalking is mentioned in the text, and the etymological connection between Anastenaria and the obscure “Asthenaria” remains debatable. The source in question also seems somewhat “unpleasant” to Greek researchers, as it speaks of Vlachs and Bulgarians, and not of Greeks/*Romaïoi*.

213 For a relatively recent anthropological assessment of the rite that does not seek utopian ancient archetypes: Loring Danforth, *Firewalking and Religious Healing: The Anastenaria of Greece and the American Firewalking Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Christian in their religion, which made possible the construction of their Greek identity. There is good reason to believe that the only connection the Pomaks have with the Greek nation is the fact that, as a result of the historical upheavals of the twentieth century, a small number of them happened to inhabit Greece.

Initially, the Greek scholars and intellectuals did not show a particular sympathy for this population. In his sarcastic refutation of the authenticity of the *Slavic Veda*, Vlasios Skordelis characterized the Pomaks as “mountainous half-barbarians.”²¹⁴ Iroklis Vasiadis did not spare his irony either when commenting on the affinity between Pomaks and ancient Thracians suggested by the pro-Bulgarian publication of Stefan Verković.²¹⁵ He designated them “Bulgaro-Pomaks” (*Voulgaropomakoi*) and “Slavo-Pomaks” (*Slavopomakoi*) in order to emphasize their distinctive non-Thracian and non-Greek ethnic character. The incorporation of part of the Pomak population into Greece did not immediately change this attitude: the first censuses in the 1920s registered the language of the Pomaks as “Bulgarian,” and publications from the interwar period referred to them as “Bulgarian Mohammedans.”²¹⁶ But, little by little, the picture changed. The scholars and activists from Papachristodoulou’s Association for Thracian Studies were instrumental again in a process that promoted a new image of Pomaks as “Islamized Thracians.”²¹⁷

The new theory was based on Skordelis’s insistence that the Bulgarian language spoken in Thrace was not evidence of Bulgarian origin, as the “genuine” Bulgarians from the Middle Ages never mixed to such an extent with the autochthonous population. More concretely, he explained that the language of the inhabitants of the Rhodopes contained many Greek words that actually showed the locals’ Hellenic roots.²¹⁸ Since the 1920s, the theory of the “mixed language” of the Rhodopes was applied specifically to the Pomaks,²¹⁹ as the

214 Vlasios Skordelis, “Ellinikon lexilogion ek tis Rodopis,” *Vyron* (1874): 885–886.

215 Vasiadis, *Thrakikos*, 32.

216 Tasos Kostopoulos, *To “Makedoniko” tis Thrakis. Kratikoi schediasmoi gia tous Pomakous* (1956–2008) (Athens: Vivliorama, 2009), 20–21.

217 According to the ambiguous expression of Georgios Skalieris, *Laoi kai phylai tis Mikras Asias* (Athens, 1922), 72.

218 It was only Bulgarian “tyranny” that compelled it to speak Bulgarian: Vlasios Skordelis, *To chorion tis Rodopis* (Athens, 1875). This point was repeated by Vasiadis. See Gounaris, *Ta Valkania ton Ellinon*, 150–151, 239.

219 Even if the Greek loanwords indicated by the Greek authors were either typical of the standard Bulgarian language—such as *dyavol* (*diavolos*, “devil”), (*h*)*aresvam* (Classical Greek *areskō*, Modern Greek *mou aresei*, “to like”), *zalisvam* (“to divert, to distract someone’s attention”—from *zalizo*, “to stun, to daze”)—or archaisms, previously used in many

Christian Bulgarians of Western Thrace had to quit the region in the framework of the Greek-Bulgarian exchanges of population. Moreover, Skordelis had linked one of the popular names of the Pomaks—*ahryani/achrianides*—to that of the ancient Thracian/Paeonian (?) tribe of the Agrianes.²²⁰ The authors from the Thracian association also discovered a Czech writer who had indicated, as early as 1878, the “Thracian origin” of the Pomaks.²²¹

The conclusion was “obvious”: Konstantinos Kourtidis and Kosmas Myrtilos Apostolidis saw the Pomaks as “Thracio-Hellenes,” and this thesis was confirmed by Polydoros Papachristodoulou.²²² A key piece of evidence was the fact that the Rhodopian Slav-speaking Muslims showed no sympathies for the Bulgarians. The Greek scholars stressed that the Pomaks participated in the suppression of the Bulgarian anti-Ottoman April uprising in 1876. They also pointed out that the Pomaks’ temporary Christianization by the Bulgarian army (more concretely, by its Macedonian detachments) and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church during the Balkan Wars fueled their extreme anti-Bulgarian resentment.²²³ Certain “racial” characteristics of the Pomaks were also emphasized.

This discourse became more pronounced in the early 1980s, when the Pomaks were described by authors such as the politician Yannis Magkriotis as an “Indo-European mountain race”: dolichocephalic, of average or above-average height, fair-haired, with white or reddish faces. Pomaks did not have the “Turko-Mongolian type” of the Turks. On the contrary, they had “Greek physiognomy,” similar to the mountainous “Greek Indo-European type.” Their eye sockets were shaped like those of Alexander the Great.²²⁴ According to

(if not all) Bulgarian dialects (*argatin* from *ergatis*, “worker,” *drum* from *dromos*, “road,” “way,” etc.).

220 Skordelis, *Meditationes Thracicae*, 23.

221 Leopold Geitler, *Poetické tradice Thráku i Bulharů* (Prague, 1878). Ironically, Geitler’s task was to demonstrate the authenticity of the *Slavic Veda* of Verković, which was vehemently rejected by Greek authors: see Kostopoulos, *To “Makedoniko” tis Thrakis*, 33–38.

222 Polydoros Papachristodoulou, “Oi Pomakoi,” *ATHLGTH* 23 (1958): 3–25.

223 It culminated again in the late 1930s and during World War II, when the Bulgarian nationalist organization Rodina (backed by the Bulgarian government) pushed for members of the community with Turkish-Arabic personal names to adopt religiously neutral but Slavic names. Greece was able to instrumentalize the Pomak resentment during the post-war Paris Peace Conference, when a Pomak delegation was sent to request the annexation of the Pomak regions of Bulgaria to Greece.

224 Yannis Magkriotis, “Pomakoi i Rodopaioi,” *Thrakika* (1980–1981): 43. The text of Magkriotis (a politician from the PASOK party who served as deputy minister of foreign affairs and of infrastructure as well as minister of Macedonia and Thrace) was later published as

Magkriotis, the language of the Pomaks—which would look “to a non-specialist like a Slavo-Bulgarian idiom”—was not an indication of a common origin with Bulgarians. In fact, the Pomak language had many Greek elements, their houses looked like Greek houses and not like Turkish ones (?), and they had popular songs that represented versions of the pan-Hellenic one about the Bridge of Arta.²²⁵

In this way, a highly speculative theory, proposed in the nineteenth century and initially directed against Bulgarian claims on Thrace, was redeployed by the end of the twentieth century in order to counter Turkish influence in the three northeastern Greek departments. The complicated Greek-Turkish relations intensified state and public interest towards the non-Turkish-speaking segment of the Muslim population of Western Thrace. Separating the latter from the Turkish-speakers, according to the principle of “divide and rule,” was proposed in order to limit Turkish identity and the “pan-Turkic propaganda” of Ankara in this region. In the mid-1990s the Greek state initiated a real ethnic “revival” of a Pomak identity, with the publication of Pomak dictionaries, grammars and other literature, aiming to codify a Pomak linguistic norm, different from Bulgarian, and to implement it at the expense of the traditional prestige of the Turkish language within the community.²²⁶ This policy was even seen as a way to get the local Slav-speaking Muslims to identify as Greek: as descendants of ancient Thracians, they were supposed to be relatives of the Greeks.

a brochure: *Pomakoi i Rodopaioi: oi Ellines mousoulmanoi* (Athens: Risos, 1990). On Magkriotis and other promoters of the Thraco-Hellenic “racial” origin of the Pomaks during the 1980s: Kostopoulos, *To “Makedoniko” tis Thrakis*, 126–144.

225 The Greek version of the Romanian “Meşterul Manole,” which also has Bulgarian and other Balkan (and not only Balkan) versions.

226 Yet this implementation had limits. The Pomak language never replaced education in Turkish at the schools in the Pomak-populated areas, largely because of the resistance of the community itself. The recent “Pomak revival” has been researched by a number of scholars (Vemund Aarbakke, Ekaterini Markou, Leonidas Embirikos, Lambros Baltsiotis, Christian Voss, Fotini Tsiibiridou and others). See Kostopoulos, *To “Makedoniko” tis Thrakis*, 155–221. In fact, in the 1990s, there was a real boom of research activity on Pomaks that has still not ended. Unfortunately, this interest is often intertwined with the strategies of state politics, the sophistication of the scholarly approach notwithstanding. In this respect, one must certainly mention the interesting “ethno-archaeological” studies by Nikos Efstratiou in the Pomak villages in the Rhodopes (*Ethnoarchaiologikes anaziteiseis sta pomakochoria tis Rodopis* [Thessaloniki: Vaniass, 2002]). Efstratiou suggests that data from the Neolithic period in Thrace be interpreted in light of his observations of techniques and family structures typical of Pomaks. Thus he projects a long and dubious historical continuity.

Despite their marginality in the Greek historical imagination, ancient Thracians have been used in diverse ways and have played a number of roles since the late nineteenth century. They were supposed to back up the Greek defense against the advance of Bulgarian nationalism from the north, to confront Western skeptics with additional proof of thousands of years of historical continuity, and to counter the Turkish influence from the east. The Bulgarian context was, however, decisive for the very construction of the Greek image of ancient Thrace. Bulgarian scholarship also reshaped it in several ways during the twentieth century and was itself largely shaped by the modern Greek—as well as Romanian—theories.

“The Land of Orpheus”: The Uses of Antiquity and the Construction of Thracology in Bulgaria

The role of ancient Thracians in the modern Bulgarian context is somewhat paradoxical. The Thracians were canonized as ethnic “ancestors” of Bulgarians relatively late (in any case, later than in Romania)—only in the 1960s. As the Bulgarians speak a Slavic language, in their case, establishing a link to antiquity was certainly more difficult than for the modern Greeks or the Latin-speaking Romanians. Yet today, the quantity of scholarly works and popular literature on ancient Thrace in Bulgaria is not only equal to that in Romania but, in some cases, even more significant. And it is certainly much larger than the number of Greek works, despite the fact that our knowledge of Thracians is greatly based on ancient Greek sources. Bulgaria even launched and became the center of a field of scholarly research known as “Thracology” (*trakologiya*).

The explanation of this peculiar evolution is certainly complex. The first Bulgarian national ideologists from the nineteenth century logically chose Slavic ancestry. Based on the vernacular Slavic tongue, Bulgarian nationalism tried to gain legitimacy and to emancipate its putative ethnic community from the cultural domination of the Greek identity, which enjoyed an overwhelming prestige among Balkan Orthodox Christians under Ottoman domination. Greek was the language of the Orthodox Church—of the Constantinople Patriarchate, which would receive competition from a separate Bulgarian Exarchate only from 1870 on. The same language was adopted by the commercial and urban Orthodox elite. Facing this “unpleasant” situation, Bulgarian national leaders tried to counter the Greek influence through the promotion of an identity that connected the Bulgarians to the Great Russian people, but also to a number of other nations of Eastern and Central Europe, in a big ethno-linguistic family. Although marginal and even “Orientalized”

in Western articulations of “European” identity (as well as in the Greek and Romanian ideologies), the Slavs gave Bulgarians a “European” belonging in different ways—including, as we shall see, through a supposed Slavic link to the antiquity.²²⁷

In the years just before, and even more so after, the creation of the modern Bulgarian state in 1878, the picture grew more complex as a result of the professionalization of Bulgarian historiography. Acquainted with scholarly standards and works abroad, Bulgarian historians were able to distinguish from the Slavs the “Proto-Bulgarians”—an obscure population with Asiatic roots who came to the Balkans in the late seventh century CE and founded the first medieval Bulgarian state. The Proto-Bulgarians (who were, as it finally appeared, a Turkic-speaking people) constituted the *differentia specifica* of Bulgarian ethnogenesis in the Slavic world. As such, they also tended to be named as the quintessential ancestors of modern Bulgarians. Thus, in a way, they assumed a role similar to that of the Thracians/Geto-Dacians in the Romanian management of origins. This trend became especially pronounced in the authoritarian climate of the interwar period and of World War II, when state anti-communism was blended with an anti-Russian and, in general, anti-Slavic attitude. Writers, historians and archaeologists from the 1930s and the early 1940s were glorifying the “political genius” of Proto-Bulgarians. At the same time, they clearly downplayed the Slavic element of Bulgarian ancestry.²²⁸

Just as in Romania, the Communist Party takeover in 1944–1945 signaled the symbolic promotion of Slavs as the “right” ancestors. Of course, in Bulgaria, this transition was much smoother than in Romania, as the national ideology had a Slavic base, and the Slavic references did not disappear despite the delusions of the fascist period. Bulgarian archaeologists were summoned to denounce the “chauvinism” of the Proto-Bulgarian trend of the previous

227 The Slavic reference of the incipient Bulgarian national ideology had many sources, stakes and articulations that cannot be discussed here. On this topic, see Diana Mishkova, “Differentiation in Entanglement: Debates on Antiquity, Ethnogenesis and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Bulgaria,” in *Multiple Antiquities—Multiple Modernities: Ancient Histories in Nineteenth Century European Cultures*, eds. Gábor Klaniczay, Michael Werner and Ottó Gecser (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2011), 211–243. See also Stefan Detchev, “Who are the Bulgarians? ‘Race,’ Science and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Bulgaria,” in *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, ed. Diana Mishkova (Budapest: CEU Press, 2009), 237–269.

228 On the development of Bulgarian ethnogenetic preferences, see Ilija Iliev, “The Proper Use of Ancestors,” *Ethnologia Balkanica* 2 (1998): 7–18.

scholarship and to discover Slavic archaeological sites.²²⁹ However, this pan-Slavism and the attack against traditional Bulgarian nationalism did not last long. After the end of the Stalinist period, since the late 1950s, the national mission of the historical and archaeological studies has been completely restored.²³⁰ Again like in Romania, the dominant doctrine and rhetoric of the communist regime became extremely “patriotic,” and from the 1960s to the 1980s, almost everything from the ideological arsenal of the previous “bourgeois nationalism” was eventually reused. The Proto-Bulgarians raided past scholarly research but also textbooks, popular publications, fiction and the cinema. This was especially the case around 1981, when the communist regime solemnly commemorated, not without a touch of megalomania, “1,300 years since the creation of Bulgarian state”—a jubilee similar to the “2,050 years since the foundation of the first centralized and independent Dacian state” marked at the same time north of the Danube. Contrasted with the Slavs, the Proto-Bulgarians were not contaminated with “Muscovite” and communist references. That is why they again became the dominant and quasi-unique Bulgarian “ancestors” after the fall of the communist regime in 1989.

But, in the meantime, another ancient people—the Thracians—were also promoted in the Bulgarian ethnogenesis, which finally took the shape of a “holy trinity” of Thracians, Slavs and Proto-Bulgarians. Historical records indicated the Thracian presence predated that of the Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians, and thus the Thracians had the advantage of being “autochthonous.” Moreover, Thracian ancestry was especially convenient during the communist era, given that it did not have anti-Slavic/Russian connotations from the fascist period like the Proto-Bulgarian one. It was also imagined as the Bulgarian link to an era and a civilization—that of antiquity—that was universally recognizable and able symbolically to add to the cultural richness of the modern Bulgarian state. Yet the search for a similar link was not so new, and it certainly preceded the communist regime.

Here a return to the late Ottoman period is necessary. As already stated, before 1878, in cultural terms, Bulgarian nationalism tried to fight the domination of Greek identity. Yet the relationship between the two was more complex,

229 The new imperative was presented and, finally, imposed during debates organized in February and March 1948 at the Archaeological Institute in Sofia. See “Diskusiya za sãstoyanieto i zadachite na bãlgarskata arheologiya,” *Izvestiya na Arheologicheskiya institut* 17 (1950): 431–480.

230 Concerning historiography, see Ivan Elenkov, “The Science of History in Bulgaria in the Age of Socialism: The Problematic Mapping of Its Institutional Boundaries,” *CAS Working Paper Series*, Issue 1 (Sofia, 2007).

as the Greek influence in many respects contributed to the formation of the Bulgarian nationalist set of arguments.²³¹ We saw that initially Greeks authors designated the Bulgarians as “Thracians”—a name that they reserved for their co-nationals from the region of Thrace after Bulgarian nationalism gained momentum. But not surprisingly, by this time, Bulgarian national leaders had already begun speculating on the possible roots of Bulgarians in ancient times. Greek education was not the only vehicle for such ideas: very important was the “Illyrian theory” of the origin of Slavs that was launched by Dalmatian authors (such as Vinko Pribojević and Mauro Orbini) as early as the sixteenth century and was maintained until the nineteenth century, when the Illyrian movement evolved into modern Croatian nationalism. In the early and mid-nineteenth century, other scholars and ideologists of pan-Slavism believed Slavs were affiliated with certain paleo-Balkan peoples. Thus the famous Polish historian Joachim Lelewel and Russian authors such as Aleksandr Chertkov imagined the Thracians and the Dacians to be Slavs. The (Czecho-)Slovak Pavol Šafárik, one of the fathers of Slavistics, considered the Slavs to be autochthonous in Southeast Europe.

Under these numerous influences, a number of Bulgarian authors from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (who were not professionals in the field of classical studies or linguistics) established a clear-cut link between Bulgarians, Slavs, Illyrians, Macedonians and other ancient populations.²³² The fact that modern linguists located the *Urheimat* of Indo-European/Indo-German/“Aryan” peoples in India had peculiar repercussions in the Bulgarian context as well. The revolutionary Georgi Rakovski and the Macedonian teacher Jordan Hadžikonstantinov-Džinot believed that the Bulgarians’ original homeland was Vedic India and established direct “links” between Bulgarian and Sanskrit. In that amalgam of genealogies, Thracians were clearly seen as Slavs and Bulgarians.

This theory was promoted during the aforementioned Greek-Bulgarian Church controversy, which evolved into a propaganda battle for the historical

231 See Roumen Daskalov’s study “Bulgarian-Greek Dis/Entanglements,” published in the first volume of the present work (*Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vol. 1, ed. Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov [Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013], 149–239).

232 On the Bulgarian appropriation of antiquity during that period: Desislava Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znachenīya na natsionalното ime* (Sofia: Prosveta, 2003), 201–227, and Mishkova, *ibid.* More precisely, on the references to ancient Macedonians: see my article “Famous Macedonia, the Land of Alexander: Macedonian Identity at the Crossroads of Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian Nationalism” in the first volume of the present work (*Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vol. 1, 273–330).

and ethnic “rights” over modern Thrace (otherwise still under Ottoman rule). In 1870 Stefan Zahariev, an activist in the anti-Greek cultural movement in the Philippoupoli/Plovdiv region, published the first Bulgarian work in which ancient Thrace got special attention.²³³ The writing was clearly meant to be a response to Greek publications on the history of Thrace, and especially of the Plovdiv area, like those of Vlasios Skordelis. But it was itself influenced by the Greek writings: for instance, Zahariev spoke of “Thracio-Pelasgians.” The author tried to substantiate his study’s scholarly claim with references to ancient writers. He was intrigued, for instance, by the question about the location of the famous Dionysian oracle kept by the Thracian Satrae and Bessi and described by Herodotus (*Histories*, vol. 7, 111).²³⁴ Zahariev provided information on ancient Thracian tribes, as well as descriptions of archaeological objects and epigraphic monuments from ancient and medieval times. Nevertheless, in order to prove the Slavic/Bulgarian character of the Thracian “Pelasgians,” he suggested absurd folk etymologies of ethnonyms and also an “Indian/Aryan” theory about Thracian and Bulgarian origin that echoed Rakovski’s.

The equation Thracians = Slavs = Bulgarians was also advocated by a close collaborator of Rakovski, the schoolteacher Tsani Ginchev. However, his “Thracian theory” was made public only in 1895, a year after his death, by the Bulgarian literary scholar and ethnographer Ivan Shishmanov.²³⁵ The same theory of ethnogenetical continuity already enjoyed the attention of international scholarly milieus after the Bosnian “Illyrian” Stefan Verković published the two volumes of the aforementioned *Slavic Veda* (1874, 1881). Leading European scholars, such as Albert Dumont, throughout the 1870s director of the French Archaeological Schools at Rome and Athens, accepted the authenticity of the enormous collection of Bulgarian “popular songs” from the Rhodopes. These narrated stories about the Hindu deities Vishnu and Shiva, as well as about Orpheus, the Trojan War, Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great, etc. The Thracian singer Orpheus was especially prominent in Verković’s publications. However, a number of scholars, including Bulgarian specialists such as

233 Stefan Zahariev, *Geografiko-istoriko-statisticheskoto opisanie na Tatar-Pazardzhishkata kaaza* (Vienna, 1870).

234 This question has attracted the interest of foreign archaeologists such as Paul Perdrizet (*Cultes et mythes du Pangée*). Zahariev stated the sanctuary was located in the Rhodopes, far west of the spot in the Eastern Rhodopes (Perperikon) where Bulgarian archaeologist Nikolay Ovcharov recently claimed to have discovered it.

235 Ivan Shishmanov, “Trakiyskata teoriya na Tsanya Ginchev,” *Yubileen sbornik na Slavyanskata beseda* (1895): 38–55.

Shishmanov, soon rejected the contents of Verković's books as forgeries similar to James Macpherson's "poems of Ossian."²³⁶

In fact, Rakovski's nationalist delusions and "Indian" genealogies were ridiculed even by his contemporaries. The idea of "Illyrian ancestry" disappeared as a result of its politicization as a Croatian national project. Moreover, the reference to ancient Macedonians never entered the mainstream Bulgarian historical narrative but remained a more or less popular myth in Macedonia and went on to play an important role in the future, in the development of the contemporary Macedonian national identity. It must be noted that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the theory that the Slav-speaking Bulgarians were autochthonous in the Balkan peninsula, and that the ancient Thracians, Illyrians, Macedonians, Goths, and others were Bulgarians, was promoted only by the historian Gancho Tsenov. He kept defending it even in the interwar period: pro-German and affiliated with the Nazi regime, Tsenov managed to have some of his works put out by prestigious German publishers.²³⁷ But he was also rejected and ridiculed by the mainstream Bulgarian historians of the era. Thus the theory of the Thracian-Bulgarian genealogical link risked having a short lifespan, limited to forgeries put forth chiefly by dilettantes.

The Thracians, however, never stopped haunting the Bulgarian imagination. Instead of the idea that the ancient Thracians were Slavs and Bulgarians, a new interpretation, much more difficult to reject offhand, gained credibility. Ivan Shishmanov, in his critical review of Tsani Ginchev's "Thracian theory," noticed that although on the whole it was "fantasy," it had a "healthy scholarly core." Quoting Tomaschek and other contemporary European scholars, Shishmanov dismissed the Slavic thesis about Thracian ethnic identity but suggested that Bulgarians might be, like the Romanians, descendants of Thracians: Slavicized in their case, just like the Romanized Thracians in the Romanian case. He also cited linguists such as the Slovenes Kopitar and Miklošič, who indicated

236 See the presentation of the debates by Gane Todorovski, "Za i protiv *Veda Slovena*," *Godišen zbornik na Univerzitetot vo Skopje* 19 (1967), available online at <http://makedonija.rastko.net/delo/11724> (accessed on January 20, 2013). A later offspring of Rakovski's megalomania was the works of the journalist Nikola Yonkov-Vladikin, who glorified the ancient Thracians as "the pillar of Aryanness," civilizers of the Ancient Egyptians and Chaldaeans, inventors of the Persian and of the Indian religions and founders of Rome. See Nikola Yonkov-Vladikin, *Istoriya na drevnite traki*, vols. 1–2 (Plovdiv, 1911–1912).

237 See, for instance, Gančo Cenov, *Die Abstammung der Bulgaren und die Urheimat der Slaven: eine historisch-philologische Untersuchung über die Geschichte der alten Thrakoillyrier, Skythen, Goten, Hunnen, Kelten u.a.* (Berlin-Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1930). His insistence that the Goths were "Bulgarians" was based on Jordanes's identification of Goths as Getae (hence, also "Thracians").

that some of the “autochthonous” Balkan features shared by Romanian and Albanian (mentioned above) also characterize Bulgarian—for instance, the post-positive definite article. The idea that contemporary Bulgarians were partially descendants of Thracians was supported in the 1890s by the leading Lithuanian national activist (and medical doctor in Bulgaria) Jonas Basanavičius (Ivan Basanovich).²³⁸ Shishmanov was cautious enough: he emphasized that answering the question required more extensive scholarly research. And Bulgarian scholars soon undertook it.

The father of professional Thracian studies in Bulgaria was undoubtedly the classical scholar Gavril Katsarov. A German-trained specialist with a wide range of expertise (as a historian of ancient Greek world and Rome, a philologist, epigraphist and archaeologist, as well as an ethnographer), Katsarov covered virtually all aspects of the ancient Thracian past—especially the fields of historical geography, political history, culture and religion. With extensive knowledge not only of the ancient sources on Thracians but also of the contemporary Western European scholarship (by Tomaschek, Kretschmer, Roesler, Perdrizet and Rohde, among others), as well as of the Romanian authors (like Tocilescu and Iorga), Gavril Katsarov was able to craft interpretations that remained influential for a long time internationally. In 1913 he published a detailed critical presentation of the ancient sources on Thracian culture and way of life that was released in German three years later.²³⁹ An English-language version of this study appeared in *The Cambridge Ancient History* (1930). Especially important was his monograph on Thracian religion, published in the famous *Realenzyklopädie* of Pauly-Wissowa.²⁴⁰ Katsarov also dedicated special studies to deities (or figures considered as such in his era and often nowadays) such as the Thracian Horseman, Zalmoxis, Zbelsourdos and Bendis. These studies also enjoyed international popularity.

238 Basanavičius believed that the Lithuanians were descendants of Thracio-Phrygians who had migrated to the Baltic area (e.g., *Lietuviškai-trakiškos studijos*, 1898). This theory was not so new. Jakob Grimm linked the Thracian language to Lithuanian (as well as to German), and he was echoed by other German and by Polish authors: Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 218–219, 229–230. The Polish and Russian theories of Slavs being descendants of Thracians who had migrated northwards certainly encouraged Basanavičius's conceptions. In his publications in Bulgaria, he claimed that he found Thracian remnants in Bulgarian personal names, toponymy, folk traditions and even the “anthropological type” of some Bulgarians.

239 Gavril Katsarov, “Bität na starite traki spored klasicheskite pisateli,” *SbBAN* 1 (1913): 1–97; Kazarow, *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Thraker*.

240 Gavril Kazarow, “Thrakische Religion,” in *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* VI A 1 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1936), 472–551.

The difference with regard to the previous (quite marginal) Bulgarian literature on ancient Thrace is visible. Uncontaminated by any Slavic theories about the origin of Thracians, Katsarov believed—along with the contemporary Western scholarship—that these constituted an ancient population related to Phrygians (and to Armenians) and referred to a particular “Thracophrygian language.” Moreover, he dismissed any idea of Thracian cultural “grandeur”: an obvious difference, this time, from not only previous but also subsequent Bulgarian works. In his earlier writings, he considered the Thracians to be “primitive” and “uncultured tribes” (*pärvobitni plemena, nekulturni plemena, primitiven Stämmen*), populations with a much lower degree of cultural development (*mnogo po-nizka kulturna stepen*) than Hellenes.²⁴¹ Indeed, just like the modern Western European and Greek authors, Katsarov accepted the Thracian origin of Dionysus and of the Orphic doctrines and noted that the most famous Greek musicians—Orpheus, Musaeus and Thamyris—were Thracians. But he rejected the idea of any sophisticated musical art among Thracians.²⁴²

Similarly, he emphasized the “ephemeral” character of the Thracian polities, especially of the Odrysian state so cherished by later Bulgarian scholarship.²⁴³ In fact, Gavril Katsarov was incomparably more fond of ancient *Macedonian* rulers, and more precisely, of Philip II. Indeed, in the 1920s, he taught a specialized course on the “Ancient Thracians” at Sofia University, in which he actually introduced Thracian studies in the Bulgarian higher education curriculum. But for his solemn speech in December 1927, when he was nominated rector of Sofia University, Katsarov did not choose as a topic Teres, Seuthes, Sitalces, Dromichaetes or any other Thracian king, but Philip II and the relations between Macedonia and the Hellenic world in his era.²⁴⁴ Later, Bulgarian Thracologists would attack Katsarov for having wrongly glorified some ancient Macedonian greatness and for having thus “underestimated” Thrace.²⁴⁵ But as a matter of fact, Katsarov was especially eager to demonstrate that the ancient Macedonians were not Greeks from an “ethnic” viewpoint. He saw the ancient “Macedonian nation” (sic) as a fusion of Pelasgians, Thracians and Illyrians,

241 Katsarov, “Bität na starite traki,” 6, 10, 45; Kazarow, *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte*, 13.

242 Katsarov, “Bität na starite traki,” 41.

243 At the same time, his evaluation of the Dacian kingdom (that would be so glorified by his Romanian colleagues) was much more positive: Katsarov, “Bität na starite traki,” 14.

244 Gavril Katsarov, *Makedoniya i Elada v vreme na Filipa II* (Sofia, 1928).

245 Alexander Fol, *Politicheska istoriya na trakite* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1972), 24.

plus Greek elements.²⁴⁶ In a way, this Bulgarian classical scholar's special interest shows to what extent, during the first half of the twentieth century, it was Macedonia, not Thrace, that preoccupied Bulgarian irredentist nationalism: the "de-Hellenization" of ancient Macedonia pursued by Katsarov went together with the demonstration of its non-Greek character in the present.

In any case, Katsarov's initial caution concerning the questions of Thracian "ancestry" is impressive. In contrast with the ethnographic methodology fashionable in his era, he was skeptical about the insistence of certain foreign authors that contemporary Balkan peoples inherited from Thracians their popular costumes, folk traditions, beliefs, agriculture, vernacular architecture and music.²⁴⁷ Thus he was extremely cautious about identifying the Kukeri—the Bulgarian version of Kalogeroi/Koukerioi—as a custom with Thracian roots, as was already suggested by Jonas Basanavičius and, after him, by the Bulgarian ethnographer Dimităr Marinov, even though he knew and quoted the works of Vizyenos and Dawkins on the Greek tradition. Katsarov believed that the Kukeri was "seldom" practiced in Bulgaria and that the Bulgarian version of this custom was "just part of the much richer Greek custom"²⁴⁸—words that certainly sounded blasphemous to later Bulgarian ethnographers. He admitted that the rite "recalled" Dionysian cult practices but believed that, in any case, it was extremely difficult to isolate specific Thracian elements in this cult. In general, he found Marinov's insistence on the Thracian origin of Kukeri "hasty," "still ungrounded," and "difficult to prove." Moreover, unlike many later works on Thracian "anthropological characteristics" that would sound quite racist, Katsarov criticized the idea of some specifically fair-haired Thracian type and emphasized the "racially mixed" character of ancient Thracians.²⁴⁹

However, his initially skeptical position about all things Thracian, in ancient times and in Bulgarian genealogy as well, evolved in the interwar period. In his Cambridge article, he stated that the ancient authors' representation of Thracians as primitive barbarians seemed "too sweeping."²⁵⁰ Before that, in a

246 Despite these elements, according to Katsarov, the Macedonian state was founded by "Macedonians-Illyrians," not by Greeks: Gawril Kazarow, *Quelques observations sur la question de la nationalité des Anciens Macédoniens* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910), 12.

247 Katsarov, "Bităt na starite traki," 47.

248 Gavril Katsarov, "Kukerite," *Periodichesko spisanie* 68 (1907): 454–458.

249 Katsarov, "Bităt na starite traki," 46; Kazarow, *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte*, 109; Kazarow, "Thrace," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 544. Compare to Peter Boev and Slavtscho Tscholakov, "Die Abstammung der Thraker nach anthropologischen Angaben," in *Dritter internationaler thrakologischer Kongress zu Ehren W. Tomascheks*, 2.–6. Juni 1980 Wien, vol. 1 (Sofia: Swjat, 1984), 313–316.

250 Kazarow, "Thrace," 534.

monograph published in Bulgarian in 1926 with the title *Bulgaria in Antiquity* (sic), he indicated that Slavs cohabited with Thracians for a long time, until the latter were fully assimilated. Thus he admitted the existence of Thracian elements in Bulgarians' way of life and "anthropological type."²⁵¹ These and similar statements provoked reactions from Greek authors, particularly from Myrtilos Apostolidis, who took issue with Katsarov in a number of works.

Gradually, in the Bulgarian context, the Thracians were becoming ancestors with an original culture and religion that had allegedly left its imprint on Bulgarian traditions. Echoing Western scholarship as well, Katsarov stated that Thrace was the homeland of a particular belief in immortality. More precisely, he discussed an allegedly Orphic doctrine of transmigration of souls that had influenced Pythagoreanism.²⁵² Ancient Thrace was not barbarian—it was *archaic*. On the one hand, during the Bronze Age, there was a "Thracian-Mycenaean cultural unity," and Katsarov believed that, in Thrace, there was a "Mycenaean influence even down into the Classical period."²⁵³ On the other hand, the "Thracio-Phrygians" had mystic and orgiastic cults (Orphic and Dionysian practices, the cult of Sabazios, etc.) that had influenced the Greeks. This archaism was somehow visible in the domination of "chthonic deities" in Thracian religion:²⁵⁴ for Katsarov, this was the case for the Thracian Horseman (Heros) as well. With all this taken into account, Katsarov did not deny Greek influence over Thracians in the Classical and Hellenistic periods for the sake of some Thracian originality. He discussed the Hellenic impact in a variety of aspects—for instance, in the art objects from ancient Thrace. Likewise, he indicated a number of Scythian and also Sarmatian influences in art and in the funeral customs of Thrace.

These last questions were already subjects of analysis by other specialists in Bulgaria, mostly by Bogdan Filov. Also trained in Germany, Filov is the indisputable father of professional archaeology and of art history in Bulgaria—fields of research that were previously developed mostly by foreigners, often without archaeological specialization. A scholar of international renown, Filov worked on both sites and monuments dating back to ancient and medieval times, particularly on Thracian sites like the tumular necropolis in Duvanli and

251 Gavril Katsarov, *Bălgariya v drevnostta. Istoriko-arheologicheski ocherk* (Sofia, 1926), 86. In his introduction to Ivan Pastuhov, *Starite traki v Bălgariya* (Sofia: Hristo G. Danov, 1929), Katsarov wrote that Bulgarian history did not start with the Slavs and that ancient Thrace was part "of our own history."

252 Kazarow, "Thrace," 552.

253 Ibid., 534.

254 Kazarow, "Thrakische Religion," 521.

the tomb in Maltepe-Mezek. Bogdan Filov proposed a number of interpretations that would thereafter remain key to Thracian studies. One such contribution was the conceptualization of a particular “Thracian art,” different from both Greek and Scythian art.²⁵⁵ In artistic metalware (toreutics) in particular, he distinguished Greek, “Graeco-barbarian” and “purely barbarian” objects, the last two categories covering works by Thracian masters. The “barbarian” reference notwithstanding, Filov’s “Thracian art” would enjoy a bright future, and not only in Bulgaria: the 1920s marked the beginning of the great discoveries of the so-called “Thracian treasures” in Bulgaria (those from Vălichitrăn, Duvanli, and elsewhere) that would later tour world museums as a part of the Bulgarian state’s official cultural promotion.

Another of Filov’s contributions to the structure of Thracian studies was his treatment of the aforementioned Thracian-Mycenaean socio-cultural relations.²⁵⁶ The idea was already present in the Western European and (as we saw) the modern Greek interpretations of Thracians: it was assumed that, initially, the Thracians had the same level of “flourishing” culture as the ancient Achaeans (or even the “Pelasgians”), which was attested to by Homer, but that something later hindered their evolution. Analyzing the Thracian beehive or *tholos* tombs, Filov noticed their similarity with the Mycenaean ones. The problem here is that a gap of at least seven or eight centuries separates these Thracian monuments, which date to the fifth to third century BCE, from the Late Bronze Age tombs in Greece. Filov’s explanation—that pre-Roman Thrace conserved Mycenaean architectural models that the Hellenic world abandoned in the Iron Age—would later be re-examined. But the idea that Thrace preserved well into the first millennium BCE an archaic culture and “spirituality” that we see in Mycenaean (but not in later) Greece would become a fundamental postulate of Thracian studies in Bulgaria.

The studies in the interwar period certainly developed within a larger ideological background. One must take into account the political context, more precisely the “Thracian question,” generated by the fact that after World War I, Bulgaria lost Western Thrace and its outlet on the Aegean Sea, while almost all of the country’s Greek population left for Greece during the exchanges of population that followed. These events further incited the Bulgarian-Greek

255 Bogdan Filov, “Pametnitsi na trakiyskoto izkustvo,” *IBAD* 6 (1916): 1–55. The same in German: Bogdan Filow, “Denkmäler der thrakischen Kunst,” *Mitteilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung*, vol. 32 (Berlin, 1917): 21–73.

256 Bogdan Filov, “Trakiysko-mikenski otnosheniya,” in *Sb. Ivan D. Shishmanov* (Sofia: Prosveta, 1920), 40–53; Bogdan Filow, “Thrakisch-mykenische Beziehungen,” *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 3 (1938): 1–7.

debates about Thracian history, including ancient history, that were already presented here from the Greek side.

Their Bulgarian side represented the same mix of scholarship, dilettantism and activism. During the interwar period, a number of popular pamphlets dedicated to the history of Plovdiv (the center of what Greek writers call “Northern Thrace”) and of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast emphasized the Thracian presence and heritage in these territories. The strategic purpose was to dismiss the Hellenic ancestry of the local Greek population through the thesis that its members were actually descendants of Hellenized Thracians and Slavs/Bulgarians. This argumentation was launched in particular by patriotic activists affiliated with the “Thracian associations” (*Trakiyski druzhestva*) and the Thracian scholarly institute (*Trakiyski nauchen institut*) in Sofia—Bulgarian counterparts of the *Thrakiko kentro* and the *Etaireia thrakikon meleton* in Athens.²⁵⁷ On the one hand, the emphasis on the ancient Thracian foundation of towns traditionally populated by Greeks (like Apollonia/Sozopoli/Sozopol or Mesimvria/Nesebăr at the Black Sea coast, which were meanwhile being Bulgarianized), tended to compromise the uniqueness of the local Greek ethnic presence and cultural tradition. On the other hand, the authors in question contributed to the popularization of a genetic link between Thracians and Bulgarians. The latter were seen as the “real” descendants of the autochthonous population, while (despite the inconsistency) the Greeks were always the product of “assimilation.”

In general, the ideological construction of national identity was evolving. Just as in Romania, in Bulgaria the interwar period was marked by a conservative and often anti-modern search of “national distinctiveness,” which spawned ethno-national “ontologies” like those of Lucian Blaga. Likewise, the folk traditions of peasantry, already the subject of interpretation and sometimes of (re)invention, enjoyed even greater interest. In both cases, the ancient Thracian “essence” of modern Bulgarians was symbolically excavated and promoted as a distinctive ethno-national heritage, allegedly intermingled with Slavic and Proto-Bulgarian elements (especially cherished in the interwar period).

This trend is visible in the ethno-philosophical writings of the essayist Nayden Sheytanov. An author of idiosyncratic constructions blending *Völkerpsychologie*, certain metaphysics of national history and a somewhat megalomaniac version of the official Bulgarian nationalism, Sheytanov was especially interested in the mystic, “magic” and irreducibly distinct elements of Bulgarian folk culture and, in general, of Bulgarian “national character” and

257 More concretely, Anastas Razboynikov, Ivan Batakliiev and Stoyu Shishkov: see Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*, 226–230.

“essence.”²⁵⁸ He believed these characteristics made up a specific “worldview” that had its roots in the ancient history and culture of the Balkans. According to Sheytanov, Bulgarians are characterized by a harmony of elements that are firmly rooted in the “old Thracian soil.” He gave Thracian ancestry special importance, since it made the Bulgarians autochthonous in the Balkans. Sheytanov even underlined the need to develop a specialized discipline called “Thracistics” (*trakistika*).²⁵⁹ At the same time, he put the Bulgarians at the very center of the Balkan peninsula (described as a “focus of world history”) and even identified it with them, while he explicitly marginalized the Greeks (whom he “deconstructed” through Fallmerayer) and cast them outside the Balkan historical metaphysics. For him, Byzantium was also Thracian and Slavic, rather than Hellenic.

Sheytanov presents the ancient Balkan “spirituality” of Bulgarians chronologically, linking together Dionysian roots, Orphism and medieval Bulgaria (specifically, the heretic Bogomilism) and ending up in the “Revival period” of the nineteenth century. In the latter case, he extolled the idiosyncratic Rakovski, with his linguistic speculations and “Indian theories” of Bulgarian origin. At the same time, he described the nineteenth-century national poet Hristo Botev as a new Orpheus. The Orphic mythology, centered on the myth of the dismemberment of the young Dionysus-Zagreus by the Titans, played a crucial role in Sheytanov’s metaphysics. He linked the resurrection of Dionysus (seen as an archetypal Balkan deity) to that of Christ and concluded that it was not Palestine but the “religion-creating” Balkans, together with the “Thracophrygian” Asia Minor, that made Christianity a world religion.²⁶⁰ Dionysus’s killers—according to the Orphic myth, the Titans—had a central place in Sheytanov’s national characterology of Bulgarians, and he dwelled on the “tragic Titanism” of Bulgarian historical existence.²⁶¹

258 See Nayden Sheytanov, *Velikobălgarski svetogled I. Balkano-bălgarski titanizăm* (Sofia: Rodna misăl, 1939).

259 See Albena Hranova, “Rodno, dyasno i lyavo: Anton Donchev,” in Albena Hranova, *Istoriografiya i literatura. Za sotsialnoto konstruirane na istoricheski ponyatiya i Golemi razkazi v bălgarskata kultura*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Prosveta, 2011), 521–568. Accessible also on <http://www.librev.com/index.php/component/content/article/413> (accessed on January 20, 2013).

260 Sheytanov, *Velikobălgarski svetogled*, 189.

261 For a more detailed analysis of Sheytanov’s writings: Balázs Trencsényi, “The Nationalization of Philosophy: Constructing a Bulgarian ‘National Ontology’ in the Interwar Period,” *CAS Working Paper Series*, no. 1 (Sofia, 2007); Balázs Trencsényi, “Relocating Ithaca: Alternative Antiquities in Modern Bulgarian Political Discourse,” in *Multiple Antiquities—Multiple Modernities*, 247–275.

Nayden Sheytanov's speculations never became mainstream intellectual fashion in Bulgaria, yet they are representative of a deeper intellectual evolution. Not coincidentally, the preface to one of his books was written by Filov, who, by this time (between February 1940 and September 1943), was prime minister of Nazi-allied Bulgaria. At the same time, an identical search for "archaic features" was underway in studies of Bulgarian folk culture. Here an important role was played by the aforementioned ethnographer, folklorist and literary historian Mihail Arnaudov. He has left important works on traditions such as Kukeri (Kalogeroi) and Nestinari/Nestinarstvo (Anastenaria) that were so dear to the Greek "laographers" as well.

However, Arnaudov's interpretation of these and other traditions was not obsessed with Thracian roots: his analysis placed them in a broader historical and geographical context in which ancient Greece and Rome, as well as influences from the ancient Orient, were always present. This is the case with his 1920 study of Kukeri, where he also dealt with the custom of Rusalii.²⁶² Just like the Greek authors, Arnaudov traced Kukeri back to the Dionysian cult. But, paradoxically, his interpretation seems even more Helleno-centric and less "Thracian" than those of the Greek ethnographers. He identifies the prototype of the folk rite as the Anthesteria, one of the Dionysian festivals in ancient Athens. According to Arnaudov, the figure of the "king," one of the main protagonists of the ritual, was clearly a survival of the role of the Athenian *archōn basileus* in Anthesteria.

His approach to Nestinari was similar. In fact, the rite was described as early as 1866 by Petko Slaveykov, leader of the Bulgarian cultural movement from the late Ottoman period: this is the first known report on the Anastenaria/Nestinari. Arnaudov published his own observations in 1917 and in 1934.²⁶³ Although he too saw similarities with Dionysian practices, Arnaudov considered the Nestinari to be a product of Zoroastrian and Mithraic influences that reached Thrace through Asia Minor. He even referred to attested or possible migrations of Syrian, Armenian and Persian populations to the Balkans. Moreover, he analyzed the rite within the vast context of ecstatic, enthusiastic

262 Mihail Arnaudov, "Kukeri i Rusalii," *Sbornik za narodni umotvorenīya i narodopis* 34 (1920). *Rusalii* is a cathartic and apotropaic dance performed by men. The tradition has what is probably a Latin name (*Rosalia*) and is typical of Romanian folklore as well. Romanians and Bulgarians share another similar custom—*Călușarii*—that modern ethnographers likewise attributed to the ancient Thracian "foundation."

263 Mihail Arnaudov, "Novi svedeniya za nestinarite," *SpBAN* 14 (1917): 43–100; Mihail Arnaudov, *Ochertsī po bălgarskiya folklor*, vol. 2 (Sofia: 1934; 2nd ed., Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1969).

as well as “shamanistic” phenomena and practices all over the world—from Siberia to Saint Theresa through the Muslim Sufi orders. His theses influenced Greek scholarship—more precisely, the interpretations by Konstantinos Romaïos and Katerina Kakouri, which were examined above. At the same time, Greek authors wrongly accused Arnaudov of attempting to “Bulgarianize” the custom and of spreading “Bulgarian propaganda” in European scholarly circles (as his 1917 work was also published in German).²⁶⁴

Mihail Arnaudov was cautious concerning the “ethnic origins” of folk traditions. But the general ideological ambiance of the 1930s and during World War II encouraged the public interest in Bulgarian folk customs and their “ancient” origins. In some cases, this interest intermingled with certain mystic religious movements that flourished in Bulgaria during the same era. Thus, in the 1930s, members of the ultra-Orthodox sect “The Good Samaritan” discovered the Nestinari and saw the firewalking as an act through which one achieved revelation and God’s grace. They started promoting the tradition among the wider public, despite the opposition of the Orthodox Church.²⁶⁵ Obviously, Nestinari, along with other “authentic” Bulgarian folk traditions, was already undergoing a peculiar process of re-invention, often marked by Sheytanov’s brand of irrationality and mysticism. Paradoxically or not, this process would become even more visible during the “rationalist” communist period.

Yet after taking power, the Bulgarian communist authorities censored much of the old scholarship and banished the dominant nationalist, conservative right and fascist ideology of the interwar period. Bogdan Filov was executed in February 1945 as the wartime prime minister responsible for the country’s alliance with Nazi Germany. But it would be far-fetched to say that the scholarly traditions were destroyed. Gavril Katsarov, retired since 1943, was honored in 1950 by the new regime with the highest award for scholarly activity (the Dimitrov Prize); the Archaeological Institute of the Bulgarian Academy published a *Festschrift* dedicated to him before he died in 1958. The Thracian themes were present in this and other publications, which also included contributions by foreign scholars, particularly those from the new, “socialist” Romania, such as Ioan Coman.

In the 1950s Thracian studies saw significant advances in Bulgaria, especially in the field of the feebly documented ancient Thracian language. These

264 See also Boliaki, *To dionysiako* (;) *Anastenari*, 180.

265 See Galia Valtchinova, “Visionaries and the National Idea in Interwar Bulgaria: The Circle of the Orthodox Association *The Good Samaritan*,” *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 54 (2009), 265–285.

involve the publications of the classical philologist Dimităr Dechev²⁶⁶ and especially of the linguist, Vladimir Georgiev, a disciple of Paul Kretschmer.²⁶⁷ While Dechev's etymologies were soon questioned and are today considered largely useless, Georgiev put forth interpretations that a number of scholars still regard as valid. He cast doubt on the idea of a unique Thracian tongue spoken in ancient times throughout the entire geographical space of modern Romania, Bulgaria, parts of Serbia and Macedonia, Greek and Turkish Thrace and northwest Asia Minor. Even before Georgiev, some scholars noted the discrepancies between the structure of toponyms in Dacia and Moesia on the one hand and Thrace *stricto sensu* on the other: while the designations of settlements ended in *-dava* in the first case (such as Argidava, Burridava and Sucidava), the corresponding elements in Thrace were *-para* and *-bria* (such as Bessapara, Skaptopara, Selymbria and Poltymbria). On the basis of these onomastic and phonetic particularities, Georgiev concluded that there were two languages: Thracian to the south and "Daco-Moesian" to the north, divided roughly by the Haemus mountains (Stara Planina).²⁶⁸

As this interpretation tended to ruin the image of Thracian "ethnic unity" on both sides of the Danube, it was rejected by leading Bulgarian and Romanian scholars, including by the main linguistic authority in Romania, Ion Iosif Russu.²⁶⁹ At the same time, Vladimir Georgiev attempted a vast reconstruction of Southeast Europe's protohistory on the basis of toponymy and phonetic changes. Georgiev thought that it was possible to identify areas of settlement

266 Dechev's main work was published in Vienna: Dimiter Detschew, *Die thrakischen Sprachreste* (Vienna: R.M. Rohrer, 1957).

267 Vladimir Georgiev, *Trakiyskiyat ezik* (Sofia: BAN, 1957); Vladimir Georgiev, *Trakite i tehniyat ezik* (Sofia: BAN, 1977). This theory was accepted by other specialists, like the Bulgarian Ivan Duridanov; see his *Ezikăt na trakite* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1976).

268 Here a special problem is the Thracian name of Plovdiv, the main city of present-day Bulgarian Thrace, which has a "Dacian" ending: *Pulpudeva* (a linguistic *hapax* in Jordanes, *De summa temporum*, 221, 283). Another problem was the status of Paeonian—the language of a paleo-Balkan population that inhabited what is nowadays the Republic of Macedonia. The topic appeared to be sensitive, given the Bulgarian-Macedonian historical controversies that began in the late 1950s. Dechev considered Paeonian to be Thracian, but Ivan Duridanov, a disciple of Georgiev, considered it a separate language.

269 Yet his compatriot Cicerone Poghiric subscribed to the theory of the Bulgarian specialist: Cicerone Poghiric, "Thrace et daco-mésien: langues ou dialectes?" *Thraco-Dacica* 1 (1976): 335–347. Today the distinction between Thracian and Daco-Moesian onomastics is validated by Dan Dana. See "Les Daces dans les ostraca du désert Oriental de l'Égypte. Morphologie des noms daces," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 143 (2003): 166–186; Dan Dana, "Onomasticon Thracicum (OnomThrac)" and *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 250.

and early migrations that happened long before any written sources, even as early as the fourth millennium BCE—an ethno-historical approach that would be used in Greece by Michail Sakellariou. Thus the problem of Thracian “ethnogenesis” and links to “Pelasgians,” Trojans, Etruscans and other obscure ancient populations acquired a new importance.²⁷⁰

Along with the linguistic studies, Thracian archaeology scored indisputable successes. In fact, on the eve of and during the first five years of communist rule in Bulgaria (1944–1949), extremely important discoveries were made, like the Kazanlák tomb with its famous frescoes, the town of Seuthopolis, and the Panagyurishte treasure (all of them dating from the late fourth to third century BCE). These would become emblematic of Thracian culture and would be instrumentalized by the communist authorities to promote Bulgaria’s ancient “cultural richness.” Yet this process took time: after the completion of an archaeological study, Seuthopolis was submerged in 1955 by an artificial lake (its construction led to the discovery of the Thracian-Hellenistic site).

Quite probably, the town of (the so-called) Seuthes III would not have had this destiny if it was unearthed ten years later. Since the 1960s, under Todor Zhivkov as the head of the party and state, the ideological transformations of Bulgaria’s communist regime led to a re-evaluation of the ancient Thracians without precedent in the country’s history. These transformations were identical to those in Romania: resurrection of “bourgeois” scholarship and increasingly nationalist policies in many respects, including in the field of history. An outcome of this evolution was a certain autochthonist trend obvious in the search for more and more ancient “roots” of the nation that were supposed to symbolically “cement” the present statehood with the party’s authority over it. A peculiar nexus between state leaders and scholars was formed concerning the promotion of national history.

Thus, as early as 1964, the members of the Institute of History at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences discussed “theses” about the origin of Bulgarian ethnicity (*narodnost*): the codifiers of the national narrative added the Thracian element to the traditionally recognized Slavs and Proto-Bulgarians.²⁷¹ The party and state leadership expressed its support. In December 1967, at a plenum of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party dedicated to the “patriotic education of youth,” Todor Zhivkov, general secretary of the party and head of the government, asserted that “in our veins” also ran “Thracian

270 The same was true of the “ethnic” ancestries of modern nations. Thus Georgiev suggested that the Albanian language was in fact Daco-Moesian—a theory that the Albanian authors, insisting on “autochthonous” Illyrian ancestry, never accepted.

271 Scholarly Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 88/2/47/2–8.

blood." He emphasized that the Bulgarians were "legitimate heirs" of Thracian history and culture.²⁷² In July 1970, scholars from the academy discussed "the question of the Thracian heritage in our lands" with Zhivkov and, in particular, the foundation of a specialized center of Thracian studies, as well as the organization of a world congress dedicated to Thracian history and culture.²⁷³

Both plans were realized in 1972 when the Institute of Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences was created and the First International Congress of Thracology was held in Sofia. The first director of the institute was the historian and classical philologist Alexander (Aleksandăr) Fol, who held the position for twenty years. In 1979 he also founded the Thracological Chair of History of Bulgarian Lands in Antiquity at Sofia University's Faculty of History. Fol was undoubtedly the main architect of the particular field of studies called "Thracology."²⁷⁴ He had good knowledge of the contemporary modern scholarship on ancient Greece and the Mediterranean, as he enjoyed the relatively rare opportunity to do research in "capitalist countries" (Collège de France, German Archaeological Institute in Rome). Fol likewise occupied important administrative positions in the state apparatus: deputy chair of the Committee for Culture (an institution equal to a ministry) in the 1970s and minister of education in the 1980s. Both his career and the achievement of the Thracological project were largely made possible by a certain high patronage: that of Lyudmila Zhivkova, daughter of the general secretary of the party and herself chairperson of the Committee for (Art and) Culture in the 1970s.

The popularization among the Bulgarian and foreign public of Bulgaria's Thracian cultural and "spiritual" heritage was an essential element of the state's cultural policy defined and directed by Zhivkova.²⁷⁵ The Thracians became a fixture in school textbooks and in a variety of popular publications, while the so-called "Thracian art" from "the Bulgarian lands" started an endless tour of the world museums.²⁷⁶ Thracian monuments in the country became

272 Central State Archive of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1b/34/88/404–405.

273 Central State Archive, 1b/36/1078/88–89.

274 Fol himself emphasizes his paternity: Alexander Fol, *Samotniyat peshehodets. Intervyuta, izkazvaniya, razgovori, otzivi, statii v mediite* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 2006), 142.

275 See Iliev, "The Proper Use of Ancestors," 11. Apparently Lyudmila Zhivkova was personally fascinated by Thracian culture: she had the work *Kazanlăshkata grobnitsa* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1974) published under her name, dedicated to the famous tomb in Kazanlăk.

276 On the ideological stakes and the chronology of these exhibitions in the 1970s and 1980s: Galia Valtchinova, "Le passé, la nation, la religion: la politique du patrimoine en Bulgarie socialiste," *Etudes balkaniques* 12 (2005): 194–205. It must be emphasized, nevertheless, that Bulgarian specialists have interpreted "Thracian art," particularly the metalware, largely as a product of Iranian (Achaemenid) influence. Some of the finest objects were

objects of careful patrimonialization that also enjoyed international support: the Kazanlāk tomb was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979, followed by the Sveshtari tomb. Similarly to “Dacia” and other ancient designations in socialist Romania, in Bulgaria Thracian references (*Trakiya*, *Orfey*, etc.) colonized the world of the socialist “economy of shortage” and of state-run tourism. They appeared on food products and, especially, on hotels and restaurants at the Black Sea coast and elsewhere.²⁷⁷ “The Golden Orpheus” is the name of an international song contest held since 1967.

Surprisingly or not, the reference to Spartacus, the famous Thracian leader of a slave uprising in Rome from the first century BCE—traditionally highly charged with class-ideological connotations in leftist and communist rhetoric—was less present in the Bulgarian public space than that of the mythical singer Orpheus. While in Romania, the central Thracian figure in the popular imagination of “national specificity” and ancient “spirituality” was the Geta Zalmoxis, in the Bulgarian context, since Verković’s *Slavic Veda*, the central Thracian figure has undoubtedly been Orpheus—also a key part of the modern Greek image of Thrace. His figure was employed in many contexts and for diverse tasks. For instance, Bulgarian musical folklore, instrumentalized for identity indoctrination during the communist period, was projected into a long historical continuity going back to a supposed ancient Thracian musical culture associated with Orpheus.²⁷⁸ At the same time, the image of the Rhodopes as “the mountain of Orpheus” was propagandistically used in the homogenizing and oppressive policy of the regime *vis-à-vis* the Muslim communities in this part of the country.²⁷⁹ It must be noted that Thracological experts were involved in a geostrategic program to promote and develop the

clearly identified with Greek workshops situated on the Propontis, such as Lampsacus: Venedikov and Gerasimov, *Trakiyskoto izkustvo*. This point of view was, however, efficiently hid from the wider public.

277 On this question, see Alexander Kiossev, “Trakiya: prednatsionalno, natsionalno i komunisticheskoto konstruirane na mesta na pamet,” in *Okolo Pier Nora. Mesta na pamet i konstruirane na nastoyasheto* (Sofia: Dom na naukite za choveka i obshtestvoto, 2004), 375.

278 E.g., Iliya Manolov, “Drevnefrakiyskie elementy v bolgarskoy narodnoy muzyke,” in *Actes du 11^e Congrès international de thracologie*, vol. 3, 289–292.

279 See Hranova, “Rodno, dyasno i lyavo: Anton Donchev,” where she discusses in particular the Thracian imageries in the historical novels of the writer Anton Donchev. In his most famous work (*Vreme razdelno*, 1964; English edition, *Time of Parting*, 1968), he depicted the “forced Islamization” of Bulgarians in the Rhodopes (whose descendants are supposedly the Pomaks). In another novel, he consecrated the newly coined “holy trinity” of Thracians, Slavs and Proto-Bulgarians (*Skazanie za han Asparuh, knyaz Slav i zhretsa Teres*, first volume in 1982). Cf. Iliev, “The Proper Use of Ancestors.”

Strandzha-Sakar area that borders Turkey. In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of fieldworks of the Institute of Thracology were held in this region, in the context of the often uneasy and, after 1984, severely damaged Bulgarian-Turkish relations.

When destined for a wider audience, the writings of Bulgarian Thracologists had a pronounced “patriotic” character, which marked some of the first publications of the founder of the discipline as well. Even the cliché of the “blood” connection between Bulgarians and Thracians can be found there.²⁸⁰ A nationalist agenda is visible in specialized research as well: in his *Political History of Thracians*, Alexander Fol bashed the “pro-Greek” tradition of European classical studies that allegedly underestimated the role of Thrace as a political factor.²⁸¹ The Odrysian kingdom (fifth to fourth century BCE) was especially downgraded, and Fol, as well as other Bulgarian scholars, attempted to restore its glory.²⁸² But it would be too one-sided and even erroneous to treat the Bulgarian Thracological production as a narrowly nationalist enterprise. In fact, since the very beginning, the ancient Thracian heritage was seen from a different perspective as well, which dominated the specialized studies and differed clearly from the parochial interest in “ancient ethnic roots” and “blood.”

Bulgarian Thracology from the 1970s on has been shaped by a number of influences—primarily by the heritage of the Western European classical studies and history of religions from the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, but also by Soviet “Indo-European studies” (pursued by scholars such as Vyacheslav Ivanov and Tamaz Gamkrelidze). In some respects the influence of modern historical anthropology can be detected coexisting with traditional Bulgarian ethnography as well as a residual structuralism intermingled with a simplified Freudianism and with Marxist-Leninist clichés. Finally, a certain Romanian influence, especially Eliade’s accent on initiatic and mystery cults, is visible.²⁸³ Using this eclectic methodology, Bulgarian scholars

280 Alexander Fol, *Dălboki koreni* (Sofia: NS na OF, 1966); Alexander Fol, *Pesenta za Sitalk* (Sofia: Narodna mladezh, 1968).

281 Fol, *Politicheska istoriya na trakite*, 10–12, 24, 27.

282 And certainly they often exaggerated it. For instance, Fol and other authors created suspicious dynastic genealogies (just like the Geto-Dacian “dynasties” launched in socialist Romania) suggesting that the big Odrysian state lasted much longer than is usually accepted. Some specialists have nevertheless criticized this approach—in particular, the treatment of the small territory controlled by “Seuthes III” (the ruler of Seuthopolis) as a continuation of the Odrysian kingdom. See Hristo Danov, *Traki* (Sofia: Narodna prosveta, 1979), 123.

283 On the influences over the construction of Bulgarian Thracology: Galia Valtchinova, “Vanga, la ‘Pythie bulgare’: Idées et usages de l’Antiquité en Bulgarie socialiste,” *Dialogues d’histoire ancienne* 31 (2005), specifically 111–117.

tried to situate ancient Thracian culture in much wider geographical contexts and “archaic” cultural-historical entities, including Southeast European, Balkan-Anatolian, Eastern Mediterranean and Indo-European. This large-scale approach was fully in the spirit of the megalomaniac (often “planetary”) pretensions of Lyudmila Zhivkova’s cultural messianism, which was inspired by occultist doctrines.²⁸⁴ Thus the narrowly ethnic interpretations were “sublimated”: in his later works, Alexander Fol tried to overcome the ethnic semantics of Thracian studies and even criticized the idea of a genetic connection between Thracians and Bulgarians.²⁸⁵

The result was a paradoxical cohabitation of a traditional ethno-national register with a “de-ethnicizing” trend. The latter was also due to the somewhat elitist character of Bulgarian Thracology, especially visible in the writings and statements of Alexander Fol. Those studying ancient Thrace presented it as a highly specialized endeavor of people with classical culture—itsself exceptional in the officially egalitarian context of a communist regime that initially even suppressed classical education in high schools. To some extent, ethno-national claims were too “plebeian” for this kind of elitism. Thus, in the late phase of Bulgarian communism, dealing with the Thracian past was seen as an autonomous space of “pure culture” and “spirituality,” far removed from the class-ideological clichés of the official doctrine.²⁸⁶

However, these aspects of Bulgarian Thracology did not erode the official nationalism of Zhivkov’s regime and even reinforced Bulgarians’ national pride in a more delicate “universalistic” manner. Thracology promoted the image of Bulgaria as a highly “spiritual space” that inherited the unique, extremely old and mystic culture of Thracians and was itself situated at the crossroads (the “contact zone”) of large civilizational entities.²⁸⁷ In this manner, Thracological constructions substantially repeated Eliade’s imagery of the ancient “Balkan” culture but also the “Balkano-Bulgarian” megalomania of Nayden Sheytanov’s “Thracistics” from the interwar period. Similarly, they were penetrated with a Sheytanov-style mysticism that was initially only favored by Lyudmila

284 On Lyudmila Zhivkova’s cultural policy: Ivan Elenkov, *Kulturniyat front* (Sofia: IIBM, Institut “Otvoreno obshtestvo,” Ciela, 2008). The most shocking projects launched by Zhivkova (a follower of Agni yoga, a spiritual teaching of the Russian painter Nicholas Roerich) are presented in Ivan Elenkov, “Lekite krile na totalitarnoto vǎobrazhenie,” *Kritika i Humanizǎm* 29 (2009): 211–235.

285 For instance, Fol, *Samotniyat peshehodets*, 105.

286 In some paradoxical cases, it was even imagined as an emancipatory form of cultural “dis-sidence.” This aspect is highlighted in Iliev, “The Proper Use of Ancestors,” 14–15.

287 An image propagated also among the foreign public: for instance, Alexander Fol et al., *Thracian Legends* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1976); Alexander Fol and Ivan Marazov, *Thrace and the Thracians* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1977).

Zhivkova's occultism:²⁸⁸ once again, Bulgarian scholars were focused on a search for Dionysian and Orphic archetypes that, over time, grew more and more central to Thracology. And again, just as in the speculations of Sheytanov but also of the self-styled *antiquisants* of nineteenth-century Bulgaria, ancient Greece was conspicuously marginalized in the paleo-Balkan or Balkan-Anatolian vision suggested by Thracological research. A closer look at its field of study would demonstrate this particular mix of patriotic pretensions and of pretentious esotericism.

The field in question is, indeed, itself extremely large. It stretches from the prehistory of the European continent (and beyond), from megalithic “sanctuaries” and archaeo-astronomical measurements, to Bulgarian folk traditions. An obsession with “the archaic” is obvious in all cases. There has been a trend to date the start of the Thracian “ethnogenesis” as early as possible, even to the Aeneolithic/Chalcolithic “cultures” from the late fifth millennium BCE. Here the main reference is the famous Varna Necropolis, discovered in 1972—the year of the foundation of the Institute of Thracology and of the First International Congress of Thracology. Bulgarian specialists tended to interpret the site as a place of birth of a “proto-Thracian” civilization.²⁸⁹ Even if this theory was criticized by other scholars in Bulgaria,²⁹⁰ the golden objects from Varna—extolled by a number of publications as “the oldest (technologically worked) gold in the world”—have been regularly included in the exhibitions of “Thracian treasures” touring the world's museums.²⁹¹

288 Zhivkova died prematurely in 1981—in the same year as the solemn commemorations marking “1,300 years since the creation of the Bulgarian state.” The jubilee was organized largely under her patronage, and it was the occasion for a surfeit of publications on the history of Bulgaria, including on the Thracian past.

289 See Henrieta Todorova, “Die Übergang vom Äneolithikum zur Bronzezeit in Bulgarien. Die Ethnogenese der Thraker,” in *Dritter internationaler thrakologischer Kongress*, 117–120; Alexander Fol, “Les grandes périodes de l'histoire thrace,” in *Actes du 11^e Congrès international de thracologie*, vol. 1, 19–23.

290 E.g., Danov, *Traki*, 21.

291 Like their colleagues elsewhere in the Balkans, Bulgarian protohistorians have used tendentious methodologies in order to prove “their own” archaeological sites were more ancient than those from corresponding layers and “cultures” in neighboring countries. In this way, their own prehistoric “ancestors” appear to be “earlier” and “more developed” than those of the neighbors. For a criticism of this approach (and, in particular, of the chronological schemes, criteria and designations) with its nationalist premises: Zoï Tsirtsoni, “‘Mon récent est plus ancien que ton moyen’: motifs d'une guerre balkanique en cours,” in *Mythos. La préhistoire égéenne du XIX^e au XXI^e siècle après J.-C.*, ed. Pascal Darcque, Michael Fotiadis and Olga Polychronopoulou, *BCH Supplément* 46 (2006): 231–244.

Here, for a time, Bulgarian scholars found particular inspiration in the influential “Kurgan hypothesis” of the Lithuanian-American protohistorian Marija Gimbutas. The end of “Varna culture” by the turn of the fourth millennium BCE corresponds roughly to the arrival of the Proto-Indo-European nomadic pastoralists who, according to Gimbutas’s theory, destroyed the gynocentric “Old Europe.” According to the same hypothesis, before the arrival of Indo-European male domination, the religious universe of the continent was centered on the veneration of a Great Mother Goddess.²⁹² On the basis of this theory, of Soviet Indo-European studies as well as of the kind of ethno-historical linguistics espoused by Vladimir Georgiev and Michail Sakellariou, Bulgarian Thracologists launched (often contradictory) speculations about the process of “Indo-Europeanization” and about the particular place of the (proto-)Thracians in it. The founder of the discipline, Alexander Fol, described massive migrations of Indo-Europeans and “Indo-Iranians,” and he set (quite arbitrary) limits to these migrations, such as the “Hyperborean diagonal” passing through Thrace.²⁹³ The last concept is not corroborated in any way by ancient geography, but it became a constant and obligatory reference of Fol’s school.

Once the Indo-European migrations and/or “consolidations” were finished, the “Thraco-Pelasgian ethno-cultural community” and “Mycenaean Thrace”²⁹⁴ appeared—cultural areas dating to the second millennium BCE. Thus the “Pelasgians,” so emphasized in Greek scholarship, in Romanian “Thracomania” and in the Albanian national ideology,²⁹⁵ likewise figured prominently in Bulgarian academic Thracian studies. Just as prominent was the belief in Thracian-Phrygian ethno-linguistic affinity, allegedly confirmed by common orgiastic cults, such as the one to Sabazios. Once promoted by Paul Kretschmer, the ancient Thraco-Phrygian link seems to be a die-hard thesis in Bulgarian Thracology; it is also the backbone of the Balkan-Anatolian “contact

292 See Marija Gimbutas, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe 7000–3500 BC: Myths, Legends and Cult Images* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974); Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

293 Alexander Fol, “Thracians and Mycenaeans: Methodology of Parallelism,” in *Thracians and Mycenaeans: Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Thracology; Rotterdam, 24–26 September 1984* (Leiden: Brill, 1989): 9–14.

294 On these concepts: Alexander Fol, *Trakiyskiyat orfizām* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1986), 139–143; Fol, *Politicheska istoriya na trakite*, 38–68.

295 See Pierre Cabanes, “Archéologie et identité nationale en Albanie au xx^e siècle,” *Dialogues d’histoire ancienne* 30 (2004): 115–122; Nathalie Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais. La naissance d’une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe* (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 166–177, etc.

zone” that Thracology claims. Concerning the Mycenaean link established by Filov, it confirmed the extremely ancient character of Thracian culture from the Classical and the Hellenistic eras (“Mycenaean type of society”): in the mid-1980s, it was abandoned in favor of the “more appropriate” term “Orphic Thrace.” Referring to these numerous affinities and contacts with prehistoric populations—with Pelasgians, Phrygians and Mycenaeans, as well as Trojans and even Etruscans—Bulgarian Thracology managed to pull the Thracians out of their marginal position in the historical development of Europe. From “barbarians,” excluded from history, the illiterate Thracians with their oral *pai-deia*—another key but obscure notion from Alexander Fol’s lexicon—suddenly appeared to be at the heart of a big prehistoric Southeast European, Eastern Mediterranean and Indo-European culture.

The latter was older than the “Greek miracle,” but the Bulgarian Thracologists took additional measures to discredit that miracle. Thus the Thracian stone-built and, in particular, beehive tombs, which struck Filov as similar to the Mycenaean ones, were treated as a product of a separate architectural evolution. The archaeologist Vasil Mikov and, after him, his colleague Ivan Venedikov found their archetype in the local “megalithic architecture,” more concretely in the primitive dolmen and rock-cut tombs. They are considered typical of the Early Iron Age (twelfth to sixth century BCE) and are concentrated in the Strandzha-Sakar area and in the Eastern Rhodopes.²⁹⁶ Thus the Mycenaean Greek influence on the beehive or *tholos* tombs, these emblematic monuments of “Thracian architecture,” was neutralized. They appeared to be “autochthonous”—even if Venedikov acknowledged the existence of striking similarities and even of close links between Thrace and Asia Minor, where the *tholos* tradition remained intact throughout the first millennium BCE.²⁹⁷ Not surprisingly, the Greek expert Dimitris Samsaris protested this “de-Hellenization” of the Thracian sepulchral monuments and insisted on the Mycenaean influence and thus on a point of view echoing Filov.²⁹⁸

296 See Venedikov and Gerasimov, *Trakiyskoto izkustvo*, 70–72; *Trakiyski pametnitsi*, vol. 1: *Megalitite v Trakiya*, ed. Ivan Venedikov and Alexander Fol (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1976), 23–24, 78–81, 122.

297 Some of Venedikov’s colleagues found his argumentation contradictory: Petăr Delev, “The Cult of the Dead in Thrace and Mycenaean Greece,” in *Contributions au 14^e congrès international de thracologie* (Sofia: Académie bulgare des sciences, 1984), 185–190. Venedikov himself established analogies between the rock-cut tombs in Thrace and the Mycenaean tombs and claimed that the idea of the *tholos* tomb, in Asia Minor as well, was Mycenaean: *Trakiyskoto izkustvo*, 71; *Megalitite v Trakiya*, 110–115.

298 Dimitris Samsaris, “Les influences mycéniennes sur les Thraces,” in *Thracians and Mycenaeans*, 167–173.

Similarly, the Bulgarian scholars did their best to discover a prehistoric Thracian navigation and “hegemony” over the Black, Marmara and Aegean seas. Here the starting point was the “Thracian thalassocracy”²⁹⁹ that allegedly preceded the archaic Greek colonization. This topic had already been discussed by Katsarov, but the historicity of the prehistoric “thalassocracies” has been questioned and even rejected in international scholarship. Nevertheless, since the 1970s, the interest in Thracology led to an unprecedented development of underwater archaeology in a search to confirm the importance of Thracian navigation. Such confirmation was soon discovered in the waters near Bulgarian ports (and ancient Greek colonies) such as Sozopol: stone anchors, hastily dated to the end of the second millennium BCE. On this basis, Alexander Fol launched the concept of “Thracia Pontica”: a vast area of Thracian maritime domination and cultural interactions that linked Thrace to Asia Minor (in particular to Troy), to the Aegean Islands, and even to Egypt and the ancient Near East.³⁰⁰ Thus Thracians grew into a cultural-historical “partner” of ancient Greece, even in the sea, and the old understanding about their primitive and barbarian level of development was completely swept away.

The Bulgarian scholars were certainly right in their epistemological critique directed at the idea that the influences were one-directional (by Greece on Thrace) and in their insistence that what happened instead involved “interactions” and “crossings.”³⁰¹ However, they were less critical in their efforts to prove that Thrace was as archaic as possible and had the largest possible spaces of cultural interactions. Soon foreign specialists in underwater archaeology put into question the dating of the Black Sea stone anchors as well as their Thracian origin: they suggested that the findings were from much later periods, even from the Middle Ages.³⁰² In the “Pontic” affair as well, Bulgarian Thracology’s approach seemed anything but levelheaded. In general, the

299 It figures in a list of similar “dominations over the seas” that allegedly took place between the Trojan War and the crossing of the Aegean by Xerxes in 480 BCE. The list is attributed to Diodorus Siculus, a writer from the first century BCE, but it is attested to by Eusebius of Caesarea, in the early fourth century CE.

300 Alexander Fol, “La Thrace et les mers. Thracia Pontica. Aperçu général,” in *Thracia Pontica I. Premier Symposium international* (Sofia, 1982), 9–15; Ljuba Ognenova-Marinova, “Thracia Pontica,” in *ibid.*, 69–81. Cf. Maya Vassileva, “Thracia Pontica as an Instrument of Research,” in *Thracia Pontica V* (Varna, 1994), 9–12.

301 Alexander Fol, “La colonisation grecque en Thrace—croisement de deux cultures,” in *Thracia Pontica IV* (Sofia, 1991), 3–14.

302 Honor Frost, “New Thoughts on Old Anchors,” in *Thracia Pontica VI. 1* (Sozopol, 1997), 101–114; Jan de Boer, “Phantom-Mycenaeans in the Black Sea,” *Talanta* 38–39 (2006–2007): 285–288.

discipline was accumulating a threatening mountain of problems, speculations and tendentious interpretations. But at a certain point, by the 1980s, scholarly verification (or, to put it in Karl Popper's terms, falsifiability) ceased to be a consideration. Not surprisingly, this happened in the traditionally much-debated sphere of Thracian religion and "spirituality."

The research of this sphere was undoubtedly the main point of interest of Thracian studies in Bulgaria as well. Publications from the socialist period naturally kept discussing questions inherited from the older scholarship. These were, on the one hand, the "Thracian" religious doctrine of "immortality" as well as "purely Thracian" deities (or those considered as such), including Zbelsourdos, Zalmoxis, Bendis and, of course, the Thracian Horseman (Heros). A traditional problem with the last figure is that it appears on thousands of votive and funerary reliefs but not in written sources (not in the Greek and Roman descriptions of the Thracian religion), and not before the Hellenistic period: actually, most images of him are from the Roman era. The classical scholar Georgi Mihaylov dwelled on the Thracian Horseman in a 1972 monograph, where he treated him as a chthonic deity with a variety of functions (such as the god of nature, of vegetation, of the animals' world, of the underworld and as a god-healer).³⁰³ At the same time, like the French archaeologist Georges Seure and like Gavril Katsarov, Mihaylov thought that the Thracians' belief in immortality could be detected in the figure of the Heros: the Thracians believed that the one who died became *hērōs athanatos*, an immortal being. He also noticed that the iconography of the horseman was borrowed from Greek funeral art.³⁰⁴ Yet this did not lead him to reconsider the status of the Heros as a particularly important Thracian god.

On the other hand, the researchers readily subscribed to the traditional idea of the Thracians as "masters of religion" of the ancient Greeks. Here the main references were, of course, the "Thracian roots" of Dionysus and of Orpheus. However, the Bulgarian scholars working from the 1960s on knew something that their colleagues from the first half of the century did not: the name of Dionysus was deciphered on Mycenaean tablets from Pylos and Crete, written in Linear B and dating back to the thirteenth century BCE. This did not necessarily lead them to doubt the Thracian origin of the god.³⁰⁵ A comfortable

303 Georgi Mihaylov, *Trakite* (Sofia: Dărzhavno voenno knigoizdatelstvo, 1972), especially 237–247. According to Mihaylov, the Heros was identified with Greek gods during the Hellenistic period, and the result was the development of a syncretic cult.

304 Mihaylov, *Trakite*, 244; Georgi Mihailov, "Epigramme funéraire d'un Thrace," *Revue des études grecques* 64 (1951): 104–118.

305 For instance, Danov, *Traki*, 60.

reaction was to pretend that this fact only attested, once again, to the close connections between Mycenae and Thrace, and thus the extremely ancient character and the crucial importance of Thracian religion. Georgi Mihaylov, however, did not accept the thesis about Thracian export in this case and even supposed Greek influence in a Thracian cult of Dionysus.³⁰⁶ Indeed, the thesis of the Thracian origin of Dionysus was launched by certain ancient Greek authors—quite probably, in order to underline the singularity of the god. That is why other ancient authors claimed other origins of Dionysus: he has been seen as an Egyptian and even as an Indian deity.³⁰⁷

Mihaylov was as cautious about the figure of Orpheus and about possible Thracian roots of the so-called Orphic doctrines that appeared in Greek contexts (Southern Italy, Athens) in the sixth or fifth century BCE.³⁰⁸ Moreover, Mihaylov even emphasized that all the “Thracian myths” in fact belong to Greek mythology: they are mentioned only in Greek and Latin literature and, to the extent that they appear on monuments from Thrace, these are products of Greek and Roman art.³⁰⁹ By the way, the figure of Orpheus, so popular in ancient Greek literature and art (for instance, in Athenian pottery), does not appear in the “domestic” Thracian epigraphic and iconographic monuments.³¹⁰ Soon, this levelheaded approach in Bulgarian Thracian studies would be completely destroyed by a kind of conceptual “Bacchic mania.”

It was signaled in the mid-1970s in the writings of Alexander Fol—in rather surprising contexts, such as publications about megaliths. Fol saw these monuments as “mysterious sacred places” dedicated to the solar cult “in its chthonic character” (sic). He discovered complex orientations of dolmens and rock-cut

306 Mihaylov, *Trakite*, 224, 227.

307 Petre, *Practica nemuririi*, 47.

308 He even directly denied the existence of such roots: Mihaylov, *Trakite*, 125, 197. The author likewise criticized the thesis of Thracian “monotheism” and the idea that Orpheus and Zalmoxis were real historical figures (Ioan Coman).

309 Mihaylov, *Trakite*, 183–184.

310 According to Ivan Marazov, *Vidimiyat mit. Izkustvo i mitologiya* (Sofia: Hristo Botev, 1992), 52. Indeed, Orpheus was regularly seen by the ancient authors as Thracian but also as other kinds of “foreigner” (for instance, Cretan). And at times he was not attributed any specific “ethnic” origin. The same was true for Musaeus, legendary musician, priest, prophet, and a *Doppelgänger* of Orpheus: in some cases he was regarded as a Thracian but in other cases as an Athenian. The foreign/Thracian origin of mythological personalities should not be accepted, in a traditional positivistic way, as an indication, or a memory, of a genuinely foreign cultural provenance. The reference to a specific origin might simply emphasize the particular nature of figures that were otherwise produced by a purely Greek mythological imagination. See Petre, *Practica nemuririi*, 49.

tombs towards phases of the sun and immediately linked them to Orpheus, “who united in his myth everything,” as well as to “the eternal question of Orphism.”³¹¹ By the early 1980s, the interpretations proposed by Alexander Fol on a variety of problems finally crystallized in his theory of “Thracian Orphism”—the one whose existence Georgi Mihaylov dared to doubt. Thereafter, it became the hallmark of Bulgarian Thracology, and as such, it deserves special attention. It must be noted that, although the concept was promoted in the 1980s, most of the publications on Thracian Orphism are after 1989. Thus, from the point of view of the dominant scholarship, there is a perfect continuity between the late communist and the post-communist period.

According to Alexander Fol, Thracian Orphism represents an aristocratic Thracian doctrine or “ideology” dating back to the second millennium BCE that was transmitted orally between those initiated in it.³¹² This kind of Orphism preceded the Greek one by centuries or even as much as a millennium. It was an ideology of the “Thracio-Pelagian community,” a paleo-Balkan oral doctrine, preceding the Trojan War. Greek Orphism, as well as Pythagoreanism, represented only later and denatured versions of it. One may well ask about the written sources concerning such a doctrine: secret, transmitted orally, and so far away in prehistory. The answer is that there are no sources—but this is also what makes Thracian Orphism so special. Fol often stated that the Thracians were a “non-literary culture.” According to him, the lack of script was the misfortune but also the greatness of the Thracians: in Bulgarian Thracology, this absence was invested with highly sophisticated spiritual values and was interpreted practically as a conscious choice by Thracians.³¹³ Thus Fol’s explanation was that this aristocratic ideology was “coded” and can be “deciphered” in a variety of data: in Thracian megaliths and art, but also in the Greek corpus of Orphic texts and elsewhere.

Strikingly enough, under a Marxist-Leninist regime, Bulgarian Thracology demonstrated a special inclination for “royal” and “aristocratic” cults and ideologies of the “elite.” One likewise sees Eliade’s accent on “initiation”³¹⁴ but also

311 *Megalitite v Trakiya*, 25.

312 His first monograph on the question was *Trakiyskiyat orfizām* (1986).

313 The Thracians did not need a script—simply put, their religious *Weltanschauung* excluded it: Dimităr Popov, *Trakologiya* (Sofia: Lik, 1999), 12.

314 Romanian authors also drew a distinction between “elite cults,” based on the doctrine of immortality, in which only the aristocratic and military class were initiated, and popular cults of agrarian character: Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 325, 388. To the extent that some of these statements are quite recent, one can also suppose an additional influence in the other direction: that of Bulgarian Thracology on Romanian Thracology.

a certain inspiration by the Italian historian of religions Raffaele Pettazzoni, who spoke of the existence of a specific “royal cult” in Thrace, different from a plebeian agricultural religion. Pettazzoni’s impact is even more visible in Fol’s idea that this cult was “urano-chthonic”: it combined perfectly the solar/uranian and the chthonic principle.³¹⁵ Whatever this means, Thracian tribes were ruled by priest-kings who were central figures within the Orphic mystery cults. Of course, the image of the priest-king here, a cliché from the history of religions itself, is based on parallels with Minoan Crete, Mycenae and other extremely archaic cultures. The “Dionysiac” orgiastic cults were, by contrast, practiced by the “popular strata”: they constituted the “peasant Thracian religion.”³¹⁶

According to Alexander Fol, the overall purpose of the Thracian Orphic initiation was the achievement of immortality. The very reference to “Orphism” in this case naturally evokes all the problematic around the myth about the young Dionysus-Zagreus who was torn apart by the Titans—a destiny that also put Orpheus in the hands of Maenads or of Thracian/Macedonian women. Fol attempted the reconstruction of the Thracian or “Thraco-Pelasgian” archetype of this tale,³¹⁷ which was otherwise seen by modern authors as the central anthropogonic belief of the Greek Orphic tradition since the sixth century BCE. However, even the existence of such a tradition is far from definitively confirmed. Pausanias, in the second century CE (*Description of Greece* 8.37.5), attributes the tale of Dionysus’s dismemberment (*diasparagmos*) by the Titans to an author from the sixth century BCE (Onomacritus), whose existence has not been proven. It is striking that the most complete version of the myth dates only from the sixth century CE: it belongs to the Neoplatonist Olympiodorus, a pagan philosopher in an already Christianized world.³¹⁸ This is not an obstacle for Alexander Fol in his reconstruction of a belief allegedly dating back to the second millennium BCE. After Zagreus, he even dealt with a second version of the “Thracian Dionysus”: Sabazios.³¹⁹

To complicate the picture further, Alexander Fol placed at the beginning of the Thracian Orphic cosmogony a pan-archaic chthonic Great Mother

315 His article “La religione dell’antica Tracia” was published in *Serta Kazaroviana*, 291–299, and was quoted in Fol, *Politicheska istoriya na trakite*, 50.

316 Sic—*selska trakiyska religiya*: Alexander Fol, *Politika i kultura v drevna Trakiya* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1990), 64.

317 Alexander Fol, *Trakiyskiyat Dionis*, vol. 1: *Zagrey* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1991).

318 More in Radcliffe Edmonds, “Tearing Apart the Zagreus Myth: A Few Disparaging Remarks on Orphism and Original Sin,” *Classical Antiquity* 18 (1999): 35–73.

319 Alexander Fol, *Trakiyskiyat Dionis*, vol. 2: *Sabaziy* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1994).

Goddess. She gave birth and was then impregnated by her son, who was the Sun and the Fire. Their *hierogamy* produced another son identified with the Thracian priest-king—an *anthrōpodaimōn* residing between the human world and the divine immortality. Not surprisingly, he also impregnated the Great Mother Goddess. In the meantime, the development ensued of the Thracian Orphic cosmos, which Fol and his followers describe using a highly mystic vocabulary enriched with Pythagorean-like numerical speculations.³²⁰

In fact, many researchers doubt Greek Orphism even existed as a specific religious doctrine and consider it an invention of nineteenth-century classical studies³²¹—although a number of texts and practices (not necessarily interrelated) were designated by ancient Greek authors as “Orphic.” But the Thracian Orphism of Bulgarian Thracology is amazing, given that there is not a single written testimony that can confirm its existence. Moreover, although ancient authors have provided plenty of data about Thracian religion, none of it refers to any specific cult to a Mother Goddess in Thrace. Of course, the ancient Greeks were not initiated in this cult—perhaps unlike the Bulgarian Thracologists who used a specific method of *interpretatio thracica* in order to

320 As “Thracian Orphism” indeed seems to be a doctrine for an initiated elite, it is better to let the initiated explain it: “The Thracian Orphic Universe has ten stages, and its numeral expression is 4 + 3 + 3. The Great Goddess Mother/Cosmos/Mountain is quiet (first stage); after that she winces and self-conceives (second stage), she wears her fetus (third stage) and gives birth to her divine Son (fourth stage). This divine Son expresses the totality in Cosmos, i.e., he has a solar (related to the sun) and chthonic (earthly) nature. He is the Sun, but he is also Fire or blood. The next three stages give the final shape of the doctrinal faith, and they reflect the daily and the annual cycle of the sun. The Son-Sun rises on the horizon (fifth stage), he turns around and thus moves the Cosmos (sixth stage), and he enters into a sacred relationship with the Great Mother Goddess (seventh stage). The sacred marriage is believed to be a fusion of the light coming from the Son-Sun/Fire with the darkness of the cave, which symbolizes the womb of the Great Goddess Mother. This act leads to the birth the child of the gods-consorts (eighth stage). This is the priest-king who, after passing an important probation, receives the insignia of power from the Great Goddess Mother and arranges the world of humans (ninth stage). The tenth stage is the symbolic sacred marriage of the king with the Great Mother Goddess, which has the task of putting in motion the life cycle again.” Valeriya Fol, *Orfey Trakietsāt* (Sofia: Tangra-TanNakRa, 2008, 54–55).

321 Claude Calame, “Qu’est-ce qui est orphique dans les Orphica?” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 219 (2002): 385–400; Stian Sundell Torjussen, *Metamorphoses of Myth: A Study of the “Orphic” Gold Tablets and the Derveni Papyrus* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2010); Radcliffe Edmonds III, *The “Orphic” Gold Tablets and Greek Religion: Further Along the Path* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

demonstrate its existence.³²² It is, however, quite likely that the Great Mother Goddess of Thracian Orphism is simply a figment of Bulgarian scholars' imagination, derived from their reading of Marija Gimbutas's theory of prehistoric "Old Europe," as well as from analogies with (problematic reconstructions of) the religion of Minoan Crete, of Phrygia, and so on. Today, the figure of the Great Mother Goddess itself is considered a cliché of the modern history of religions, expressing sexist stereotypes.³²³

In any case, since the 1980s, as a result of Alexander Fol's institutional power, Bulgarian Thracologists subscribed indiscriminately to Thracian Orphism with all of its concepts: Hyperborean diagonals, *paideia*, solar-chthonic unity, and so on. The scholars started discovering Great Mother Goddesses, Orphic and Dionysian elements everywhere: it was enough to have a female image on a tomb fresco or over a metal application in order to proclaim it a representation of the Great Mother Goddess. "Traditional" Thracian gods, such as the Thracian Horseman, were quickly accommodated to the solar-chthonic schema; Zalmoxis became a personification of the aristocratic elite passing the initiatic rites of immortalization.³²⁴

Nevertheless, all of the main notions of Bulgarian Thracology have been criticized in the field from which they have been taken: the study of ancient Greek religion. For instance, the heuristic value of "initiation" is generally put into question.³²⁵ It is *a priori* problematic to what extent the term "mysteries," a concept with a certain meaning for Greek religion, is applicable in non-Greek contexts. Walter Burkert, one of the leading scholars of Greek mythology today, has criticized the entrenched clichés about the ancient mystery cults. Among these are the theses about their allegedly foreign origin³²⁶ and highly spiritual

322 Alexander Fol, "Interpraetatio Thracica," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 11 (1983), 217–230. For some reason, Fol spells the term "interpraetatio" throughout the essay, despite the fact that the standard Latin form is *interpretatio*.

323 Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols*, 200–207; Philippe Borgeaud, *La Mère des dieux. De Cybèle à la Vierge Marie* (Paris: Seuil, 1996); Lucy Goodison and Christine Morris, *Ancient Goddesses: The Myths and the Evidence* (London: British Museum Press, 1998); Christine Morris, "From Ideologies of Motherhood to 'Collecting Mother Goddesses,'" in *Archaeology and European Modernity: Producing and Consuming the "Minoans"*, eds. Yannis Hamilakis and Nicoletta Momigliano (Padua: Bottega d'Erasmus, Aldo Ausilio Editore, 2006), 69–78.

324 See Dimităr Popov, *Zalmoxis. Religiya i obshtestvo na trakite* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1989).

325 *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives: New Critical Perspectives*, eds. David Dodd and Christopher Faraone (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

326 Not only Bulgarian but also Greek and Romanian scholars have insisted that practically all the Greek mystery cults were of Thracian origin: the Eleusinian mysteries, the Cabeiri,

character that was close to (or that paved the way for) Christianity,³²⁷ as well as the dogma about the mysteries as a triumph over death and their association with the figure of the “Dying-and-Rising God” popularized by James Frazer.³²⁸ Today, in the studies of ancient cults, concepts such as “solar” and chthonic,” abundantly used by Bulgarian Thracologists, are deemed empty of meaning.³²⁹ The dichotomy of “Apollonian and Dionysian,” which one sees regularly in the publications of Fol and that goes back to Friedrich Nietzsche and Erwin Rohde, is clearly anachronistic.³³⁰

It would certainly be unfair to limit the scope of Thracian studies in Bulgaria since the 1980s to Alexander Fol's speculations—which, with the passing of time, evolved in completely idiosyncratic constructions formulated in an obscure and even completely hermetic language.³³¹ There are also other patterns of research on the Thracian past that do not necessarily fall into the categories of Thracian Orphism. Unfortunately, in the field of Thracian religion and “spirituality,” even the “alternative” approaches seem often highly speculative. Such is the case with Ivan Marazov, art historian and specialist of “Thracian art,” one of the most publicly visible Thracologists today. Marazov's conceptual framework is shaped by influences both from the “East” and the “West”: the Soviet/Russian Scythological school and its interpretations of the Scythian

the Theoi Megaloi at Samothrace and so on. It must be noted that the Bulgarian specialists also “Thracized” the most famous oracle of the ancient Greek world: Delphi. It was seen as originally “Thracio-Pelasgian”: Fol, *Trakiyskiyat orfizām*, 142–150. On this basis, Fol even established a spiritual link between Pythia and the Bulgarian clairvoyant Vanga, whose “gift” was of great interest to Lyudmila Zhivkova: see Valtchinova, “Vanga, la ‘Pythie bulgare.’”

- 327 In Bulgaria, the link between the Thracian “belief in immortality” and Christianity was not as strong as in Romania. However, there are publications that argue that Thracian Orphism paved the way for the adoption of Christianity and even influenced the early Christian doctrine: Roman Tomov, *Imperatorite-orfitsi. Orfizām i ranno hristiyanstvo IV–VI vek* (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo/Prozorets, 1998).
- 328 Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1987).
- 329 Renate Schlesier, “Olympische Religion und Chthonische Religion,” in *The Notion of “Religion” in Comparative Research: Selected Proceedings of the XVth IAHR Congress*, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Rome: “L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 1994), 301–310.
- 330 See Cornelia Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Archaic Greece: An Understanding through Images* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), more concretely 235–254: “Modern Mythologies: ‘Dionysos’ versus ‘Apollo.’”
- 331 See, for instance, Alexander Fol, *Chovekāt vāv vidove vreme* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1998); Alexander Fol, *Chovekāt vāv vidove prostrantsva* (Sofia: Reklamna agentsiya Ochi, 2003).

“animal art style,” the Soviet/Russian Indo-European and Eurasian studies (exemplified by Vyacheslav Ivanov), Mircea Eliade’s focus on “the archaic” and “the sacred,” Georges Dumézil’s trifunctional scheme of Indo-European societies and religions, and modern structuralism in anthropology, especially the “Paris school” of historical anthropology of ancient Greece (Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Marcel Detienne).

The result is an in-depth search of ancient semantics “coded” in images on art objects from Thrace (particularly the toreutics). These images are projected on the extremely large background of Indo-European comparativism: especially emphasized are the parallels between Thrace and ancient Iran, as well as Vedic India.³³² In fact, Marazov’s interpretations demonstrate all the epistemological shortcomings of the studies of Indo-European religion and, more concretely, of the structuralism in their field. On the one hand, the structuralist accent on *implicit* semantic paradigms means that the results are often ultimately unverifiable and remain, in the best case, beautiful hypotheses. On the other hand, the publications of Marazov, and in general of Bulgarian Thracologists, abound in not-so-beautiful clichés coming from traditional Aryan studies, such as Indo-European horsemen, as well as Hyperboreans worshipping solar cults and organized in “secret masculine societies” (*Männerbünde*) like those in ancient Iran.³³³ More innocent but no less problematic and criticized in other scholarly contexts is the easy application of the concept of “shamanism” that we see in works on Thracian/paleo-Balkan mythology published by Marazov and by the Bulgarian classical scholar Bogdan Bogdanov.³³⁴

Problematic or not, the constructs created by Bulgarian Thracologists found their “foundations”: just as in Romania and in Greece, they lay in age-old folk traditions. Following the path traced by the previous generation of ethnographers and folklorists—such as Mihail Arnaudov—the new specialists confirmed, intensified and even enriched the “ancient substratum” of Bulgarian folklore. Ivanichka Georgieva, the leading researcher of “Bulgarian folk mythology,” discovered a great variety of Thracian survivals attesting to

332 See Ivan Marazov, *Mitologiya na trakite* (Sofia: Sekor, 1994); Ivan Marazov, *Mitologiya na zlatoto* (Sofia: Hristo Botev, 1994).

333 On Thracian “secret male societies”: Popov, *Zalmoksis*, 101–110; Marazov, *Mitologiya na zlatoto*, 136–137.

334 Bogdan Bogdanov, *Orfey i drevnata mitologiya na Balkanite* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1991); Marazov, *Mitologiya na trakite*, 166–173. For a critique both of the fashion of the “initiatic cults” and of the shamanistic thesis: Dan Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 256–287; Dan Dana, “Preuve et malentendu. Le mythe historiographique de l’origine et de la transmission du chamanisme en Grèce ancienne,” *Cahier du Centre de recherches historiques. La preuve en histoire* 45 (2010): 109–128.

the uninterrupted continuity of Bulgarian folk culture since the most ancient times.³³⁵ As a result, the Kukeri and the Nestinari were proclaimed unequivocally to be relics from the Thracian religion and spirituality—and they were not the only ones. Even a rather cautious scholar like Georgi Mihaylov believed that a number of Bulgarian customs and legends dated back to ancient times; thus the South Slavic popular hero Krali Marko (Marko Kraljević) became a reincarnation of the Thracian Horseman.³³⁶ The aforementioned Rusalii, the viticulture feast of Trifon Zarezan, the custom known as German (expected to bring rain), the popular Saint George and Saint Marina, and even Christmas and New Year customs (Koledari, Survakari) were seen as belonging to a Thracian religious base.³³⁷

Not surprisingly, in most of the cases, connections were made between these rites and the “Thracian Dionysus,” identified by Alexander Fol in the figures of Zagreus and Sabazios. Especially the “white” Kuker, without a mask, from the Strandzha area, was clearly interpreted as a representation of Dionysus-Zagreus-Sabazios.³³⁸ Thus a thesis put forth more than a century ago by the Greek writer Georgios Vizyenos was repeated and enhanced by Bulgarian Thracology, despite the fact that there are similar customs in Central Europe. The archaeologist and art historian Ivan Venedikov actually claimed that the Romans brought the Kukeri into the Celtic settlements in Central and Western Europe but that the rite was authentically created by “the Thracian village.”³³⁹ Concerning the other hallmark of Strandzha—the fire-walking dance of Nestinari—it was easily linked to the solar/fire phantasms of Thracian Orphism. Bulgarian specialists discovered in it the figure of the Sun-Son of the Great Mother Goddess and claimed that the rite was a relic of the Thracian “belief in immortality.”³⁴⁰

In fact, the “modern interdisciplinary scholarly discipline” of Thracology was (and is) hostage to a quite traditionalist ethnographical approach that arbitrarily projects folk traditions back in history and discovers them retroactively in real or supposed ancient cults. Like Chourmouziadis in 1873, Bulgarian

335 Ivanitchka Georgieva, “Survivances de la religion des Thraces dans la culture spirituelle du peuple bulgare,” in *Actes du 11^e Congrès International de Thracologie*, vol. 3.

336 Mihaylov, *Trakite*, 7–8.

337 See the monograph of the specialist of Thracian art Ivan Venedikov, *Mednoto gumno na prabălgarite* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1983).

338 Stoyan Raychevski and Valeriya Fol, *Kukerăt bez maska* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1993).

339 Venedikov, *Mednoto gumno na prabălgarite*, 190–191.

340 Valeriya Fol and Ruzha Neykova, *Ogăn i muzika* (Sofia: BAN/Tilia, 2000).

specialists claim that the exclamations of the *nestinari* as they dance over hot coals (*vah! vāh!*) are invocations of Bacchus. In the same way, the shout *Sabo, Sabo!* during the festival of Saint Athanasius in the town of Etropole is linked to the cult of Sabazios.³⁴¹ In reaching such conclusions, it is highly doubtful that proper standards of scholarly research were adhered to. The last example is clearly based on a folk etymology—that is, merely the fact that the two words sound alike. An academic scholar such as Ivan Venedikov even discovered Sumero-Akkadian traces in Bulgarian folklore.³⁴²

The result of this evolution is certainly ironic. Born in an academic tradition that started with scholars of international importance such as Gavril Katsarov and Bogdan Filov, Bulgarian Thracian studies, by the 1990s, proceeded to rehabilitate dilettantish publications from the nineteenth century such as those of Georgi Rakovski and—most notably—the *Slavic Veda* of Stefan Verković.³⁴³ Interwar speculations like those of Nayden Sheytanov, linking Thracian Dionysian and Orphic archetypes with the medieval heretic Bogomilism and, through it, with the Bulgarian folk culture, are to be heard at congresses of Thracology.³⁴⁴ Such facts show again to what extent it is difficult to distinguish academic Thracology from popular Thracomania, despite the Bulgarian Thracologists' pretense of engaging in highly specialized scholarly research.

As stated earlier, in terms of Thracological works and methodology, there is a perfect continuity between the 1980s and the post-communist period. However, the fall of the communist regime in Bulgaria had a certain influence, quite ambivalent, on this field of study. On the one hand, Alexander Fol's institutional authority fell as well—unlike his symbolic authority as “father of Thracology,” which lasted at least until his death in 2006. In any case, archaeologists researching Thracian sites formulated critiques of basic postulates of

341 Fol, *Trakiyskiyat Dionis*, vol. 1, 74; Fol, *Trakiyskiyat Dionis*, vol. 2, 209–211; Dilyana Boteva, “St. Athanase d'Etropole, Sabazios et l'oracle de Dionysos,” *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 23 (1997): 287–298.

342 See Ivan Venedikov, *Razhdaneto na bogovete* (Sofia: Arges, 1992).

343 See Bogdan Bogdanov, “Zagadkata ‘Veda Slovena’”—introduction to the new edition of Verković's collection from 1997. It was published by the Open Society Institute in Sofia: its director until 1997 was the classical scholar Bogdanov. His father, the writer Ivan Bogdanov, had attempted to demonstrate the authenticity of the *Slavic Veda*: see his *Veda Slovena i nasheto vreme* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1991). See also Fol, *Samotniyat peshehodets*, 108; Idem, *Trakiyskata kultura. Kazano i premälchano* (Sofia: Tangra-TanNakRa, 2009), 179.

344 Vidka Nikolova, “Bogomilstvoto-nestinarstvo i negovi trako-orficheski predobrazi,” in *Eighth International Congress of Thracology: Thrace and the Aegean*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Europa Antiqua, BAS, 2002), 909–917.

the “father of Thracology.”³⁴⁵ On the other hand, just like in Romania, popular Thracomania only flourished and further contaminated the scholarship. This process is especially visible in the archaeological “Thracian tomb-hunting” and in a new “megalitho-mania” promoted by academic scholars.

New scholarly projects, publications and Web sites claim that the “Thracian megalithic sanctuaries” were complex astronomical observatories, similar to Stonehenge. The dolmens and the rock-cut tombs were oriented according to the summer or the winter solstice in a perfect mathematical manner: according to specialists such as Valeriya Fol, they were sanctuaries of the God-Sun, the Son of the Great Mother Goddess (and of the Mother Goddess itself).³⁴⁶ In a competition with Valeriya Fol, the archaeologist Nikolay Ovcharov discovered important caves he believed the Thracians used to symbolize the vulva of the Great Mother, fertilized by the phallus of the Sun. They were also used for mysterious “Dionysian orgies.”³⁴⁷ Starting from 2000, Ovcharov won great popularity by publicizing the “Sacred town” and “Thracian sanctuary of Dionysus” in Perperek/Perperikon, as well as the “Tomb of Orpheus” next to the village of Tatul—both in the Eastern Bulgarian Rhodopes. In fact, both sites were already known and researched: the idea that the rock-cut monument in Tatul was the “Tomb of Orpheus” was put forth, as early as 1976, by Alexander Fol.³⁴⁸ As we already saw, the location of the Thracian sanctuary of Dionysus, mentioned by Herodotus (*Histories*, vol. 7, 111), attracted the interest of Stefan Zahariev in the nineteenth century. The question had been discussed by a number of archaeologists, Bulgarian and foreign. However, no one looked for it in the Eastern Rhodopes, and hence, no one had the chance to “discover” it.

345 Representative of this “revisionist” trend is the monograph of Konstantin Rabadzhev (Rabadjiev), *Elinski misterii v Trakiya. Opit za arheologicheski proshit* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 2002). The title of the book alone—*Hellenic Mysteries in Thrace*—is “provocative”: in general, it is assumed that the Hellenic mysteries were Thracian... Critiques of Alexander Fol’s methods were expressed by foreign archaeologists as well: Zofia Archibald, “Thracian Cult—from Practice to Belief,” in *Ancient Greeks West and East*, ed. Gocha Tsetschladze (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 1999), 427–468.

346 For instance, <http://rock-cut.thracians.org/en/index.php> (accessed on January 20, 2013). See also Valeriya Fol, *Skalni toposi na vyara v Yugoiztochna Evropa i v Mala Aziya prez drevnostta* (Sofia: BAN, 2007); Valeriya Fol, “Bogăt, pochitan ot vsichki hora,” *Balkani* 1 (2012): 21–32.

347 http://www.nasamnatam.com/patepis/Peshtera_Vulvata-278.html (accessed on January 20, 2013).

348 *Megalitite v Trakiya*, 25.

Public interest in the Thracian chamber tombs also experienced a real renaissance in the late 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century, when the archaeologist Georgi Kitov discovered a number of important monuments of this kind in Central Bulgaria. As a result, the area between Kazanlāk and Shipka, previously known as “the Valley of the Roses,” was renamed “the Valley of the Roses and of the Thracian Kings” (sic).³⁴⁹ Both Kitov and Ovcharov competed in the media for the moniker of “Bulgarian Indiana Jones.”³⁵⁰

Not surprisingly, the scholars’ Thracomania is fully embraced and developed by dilettantes. At present, neo-pagan associations perform mysterious rites at the “Thracian cult complex” near Starosel, discovered by Kitov: there the enthusiasts regularly worship the Great Mother Goddess and the Sun. Some of them even founded a “Thracian Church” that is ruled, for some reason, by “cardinals” (sic). The same activists meanwhile discovered and decoded a Thracian script—a “discovery” that certainly contradicts the traditional theory about the ancient Thracians’ illiteracy. Others recycled the idea that the Thracians were, in reality, Bulgarians, or even insisted that the Bulgarians were the ancestors of the ancient Thracians.³⁵¹ In general, the autochthonist theory from the nineteenth century and Gancho Tsenov’s publications from the beginning of the twentieth century enjoy popularity on Web sites, discussion forums, and the like. At the same time, old folk traditions associated with Thracians—primarily Nestinari and Kukeri—are achieving greater popularity and are sometimes even more instrumentalized than before.³⁵² In 2009 it was Bulgaria, not Greece, that succeeded in adding the Thracian firewalking custom to UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.³⁵³

349 In his scholarly publications, Kitov (who died in 2008) demonstrated quite a conservative ethnocentric approach towards the Thracian monuments and a faithful support of the postulates of “Thracian Orphism.” See, e.g., Georgi Kitov and Daniela Agre, *Vāvedenie v trakiyskata arheologiya* (Sofia: Avalon, 2002).

350 Ovcharov did not resist the temptation to publish autobiographical writings under this sobriquet: Nikolay Ovcharov, *Otkritiyata na bālgarskiya Indiana Dzhouns* (Sofia: Zahariy Stoyanov, 2008).

351 Stefan Gayd, *Trakiyskoto pismo—dekodirano*, vols. 1–4 (Sofia: Institut po transtsendentna nauka, 2006–2008); Vladimir Tsonev, *Drevnite bālgari—pradedi na trakite* (Sofia: Litera prima, 2007).

352 About Kukeri, see the recent monograph of the anthropologist Gerald Creed (Creed, *Masquerade and Postsocialism*), who analyzes the reasons for this “rebirth” of the tradition in post-communist Bulgaria.

353 It must be noted that the Thracian heritage, with its “mysterious aura,” is commercialized and commodified for the purposes of tourism and the wine industry much more actively nowadays than during socialism. It suffices to look at the popular wine labels, some of

Paradoxically or not, despite all these developments, the ancient Thracians have certainly lost some of their symbolic authority as Bulgarian “ancestors” since the fall of the communist regime. By the late 1980s, the extremely spiritualized image of the Thracians was linked to that of the Proto-Bulgarians—who in the meantime were also reinterpreted as a people with a unique ancient culture.³⁵⁴ Today it is they who attract the biggest share of popular obsessions and manias about ethnic roots and origins. In accordance with the new anti-communist/anti-Russian vogue, the only “ancestors” of the Slav-speaking Bulgarians who seem, for the moment at least, out of public favor are, once again, the Slavs.

Thracian Studies: A Successful Balkan Entanglement with Problematic Results

Throughout this essay, we have followed the diverse ways in which representatives of contemporary Balkan nations have employed the mysterious entity of the ancient Thracians to further their national ideologies. Romanians and Bulgarians, as well as Greeks, have claimed to be descendants and cultural heirs of this paleo-Balkan people whose language, society and culture are in many respects little known. The absence of a sufficient number of reliable sources and, most of all, of a Thracian written record means that many details of this ancient people remain unfamiliar to us or problematic. Indeed, the numerous gaps in our knowledge about ancient Thracians helped make them so inspiring to modern nation-builders and scholars. This relative lack of sources and of confirmations provides a blank slate onto which one can project whatever content is deemed usable for the construction of nation's past, originality and glory.

which curiously refer to themes from Thracian Orphism: Thracian Mystery, Maenad, Mezek (the Thracian tomb that inspired Filov's Thraco-Mycenaeans parallelism), Thracian Gold, Bendis, Zagreus, Sabazios . . .

- 354 As witnessed by the publications of Ivan Venedikov cited here. One finds two main protagonists in them: Thracians and Proto-Bulgarians, often designated in the literature after 1989 simply as “Bulgarians” or as “ancient Bulgarians.” Alexander Fol was a key figure in the Tangra-TanNakRa Foundation, which finances publications on “ancient Bulgarians.” According to the new conceptions, these had Iranian (that is, “Aryan”), not Turkic, roots. For a presentation, full of irony, of the (often aberrant) interpretations on the origins, the “political genius” and the “exceptional” culture of the “ancient Bulgarians” that proliferated after 1989: Roumen Daskalov, *Chudniyat svyat na drevnite bălgari* (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2011).

Yet the development of scholarly Thracian studies—of Thracology—likewise provides a second perspective on the problem. Although guided, in most cases, by “patriotic” motives in their interest in the ancient Thracian past, modern Southeast European researchers studied, quoted, and sometimes even copied each other. They debated among themselves, but they were also able to pay attention to one another’s interpretations, measure their degree of probability and, in many instances, accept them. In any case, in Thracology, the forms and examples of international agreement were more frequent than in other scholarly contexts. Given all the nationalist fervor that things related to history traditionally cause in the Balkans, Thracian studies instead represents a “success story.” However, it is an ambiguous and largely paradoxical success story when one takes into account the constant political instrumentalization of Thracian studies for the sake of national identity. The forms of consensus were themselves made possible by a certain political context.

It was already there in the 1970s when, by organizing international congresses and a number of conferences and workshops, Bulgarian Thracologists initiated a certain opening to specialists from the neighboring countries and, in general, to international scholarly circles.³⁵⁵ This somehow entailed the abandonment of any strong claims of “ownership” over the Thracian past. It must be noted that the political status quo in Southeast Europe by this time facilitated the dialogue with (certain) neighbors. Thus the fact that both Bulgaria and Romania belonged to the “socialist camp” encouraged communication between scholars from Sofia and from Bucharest, particularly in the field of Thracian studies.³⁵⁶ At the same time, the old Greek-Bulgarian debate on the history and the “ethnic character” of Thrace and Macedonia virtually disappeared, as a result of the surprising improvement of relations between socialist Bulgaria and Greece, which was under the right-wing military dictatorship of the colonels in Athens. Suddenly, Greek and Bulgarian scholars were able to sit at the same table. Unfortunately, this was largely due to the fact that they found new common “enemies”: the supposed “Turkish propaganda” and the Macedonian nationalism in and outside Yugoslavia.

As a consequence of this dialogue, many theses and concepts that were put forth by scholars in one of these countries can be found in the scholarship

355 This was somewhat successful: suffice it to say that the Third Congress of Thracian Studies was organized in Vienna, and the fourth in Rotterdam.

356 In other fields of research, such as medieval history, this communication was going to be much more difficult. Often it was spoiled by nationalist controversies—despite the “socialist internationalism” theoretically required from the scholars in both countries. See Roumen Daskalov’s contribution to the present volume.

of another one. This was the case as early as the late nineteenth century, when Bulgarian authors appropriated the Greek notion of extremely archaic “Thracio-Pelasgians.” It was Greek scholars who emphasized all the allegedly Thracian “contributions” to Greek religion and culture: Dionysus, Orpheus and Orphism, Eumolpus—the Thracian founder of the Eleusinian mysteries—and the Thracian priests both in Eleusis and in Delphi. The Bulgarians, including the professional Thracologists from the 1970s on, readily subscribed to these postulates. But while, in the Greek context, they were supposed to emphasize the prehistoric links between Thracians and Greeks, the Thracians’ “quasi-Greek” and eventually completely Hellenized nature, in the Bulgarian context, the same references were employed in order to distinguish Thracian culture from Hellenic culture, to demonstrate its exceptionally “archaic” character and to underline to what extent ancient Greeks were indebted to Thracians. The case is similar for the “folk traditions” used in both Greek and Bulgarian argumentation: the firewalking and carnival rites of Greek- and Bulgarian-speaking peasants from the modern region of Thrace. Proposed by Greek writers and largely accepted by the Greek *laographia*, the thesis of the ancient Thracian-Dionysian origin of these rituals was promptly reproduced by Bulgarian scholars. It must be noted that the Bulgarian Thracologists not only knew Katerina Kakouri’s publication but even got to observe the rite performed by Greek refugees from Bulgarian Strandzha residing in Northern Greece.³⁵⁷ Conversely, conclusions drawn by Mihail Arnaudov influenced Greek scholarship; paradoxically, the Bulgarian ethnographer even reinforced the “Greek positions” in the debate about the historical roots of firewalking. Curiously enough, in their demonstration of the “Thracian ancestry” of the Pomaks of Western Thrace, Greek propagandists reproduced a claim made by the pro-Bulgarian *Slavic Veda*, whose authenticity was attacked by previous Greek authors.

The Romanian-Bulgarian entanglement in Thracian studies is at least as important as the Greek-Bulgarian. In fact, a mere glance at the names of participants in congresses of Thracology might leave the impression that, to this day, Thracology remains largely a kind of Bulgaro-Romanian affair. Romanian influences are clear, especially in the Bulgarian treatment of the Thracian “initiatric” and “mystery cults” and of Thracians’ famous “belief in immortality.” Mircea Eliade’s authority remains visible in the Bulgarian publications. As a matter of fact, Eliade supposed, already before Alexander Fol, that the Thracians shared a fundamental myth of *hierogamy* between the Great Mother Goddess and the

357 The fieldwork took place in 1993, in probably the most famous village of the *anastenarides*: Agia Eleni, in the region of Serres, populated by people from Kosti in the Bulgarian part of Strandzha. See Fol, *Trakiyskiyat Dionis*, vol. 2, 186–202.

god of thunder, and that the son of these two was Dionysus. Conversely, some later references to a Great Mother Goddess in Romanian scholarship might be the result of Bulgarian influence.³⁵⁸ A number of other main “protagonists” in the Bulgarian Thracological constructions appeared earlier in Romanian writings, including in the “Thracomania” of Nicolae Densușianu—for instance, the Hyperboreans (and, of course, the Pelasgians).³⁵⁹ Extremely important, even today, is the Romanian-Bulgarian interaction in the field of linguistic research: the studies of the ancient Thracian tongue are undertaken mostly by specialists from these countries. No less impressive are the parallels in the evolution of the intellectual interest towards Thracians in both countries, with its political background: the autochthonist search for national distinctiveness in the interwar period, while under authoritarian regimes and fascist ideologies; the phase of “national communism” (or rather of communist nationalism) since the late 1960s that revived the heritage of the fascist period; and the post-communist developments as well.

Nevertheless, the results of this Balkan collaboration are questionable and, nowadays, even anachronistic in many respects. The problem of Thracian studies today is, to a large extent, its conceptual and methodological obsolescence. If a century ago, it was up to date with the dominant theses and concepts of classical studies and related scholarly disciplines (“Indo-European studies,” ethnography, etc.), nowadays, it looks, in many respects, like rudiments from another era. The solar Indo-Europeans and “Hyperboreans,” organized in initiatic *Männerbünde*, the obligatory analogies with Iranian and Indian religions that we still see in the Thracological publications, are remnants from the Aryan imageries from the nineteenth century. These references were especially promoted by scholars with controversial links to fascist movements and ideologies (Eliade, Dumézil, Stig Wikander) and, not by chance, the same notions were instrumentalized by the propaganda of the extreme right.³⁶⁰

358 See Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 277 and 354.

359 The mythical people from the North were researched by a Bulgarian author: Tsvete Lazova, *The Hyperboreans: A Study in the Paleo-Balkan Tradition* (Sofia: University Press, 1996). Lazova’s definition of “paleo-Balkan” is certainly curious: it encompasses the Balkans, Asia Minor, the Aegean Islands, Crete, Southern Italy and Sicily. Thus a huge part of the ancient Hellenic world is “Balkanized” and, in fact, “Thracized,” while the core of ancient Greece is completely isolated from the extremely “archaic” Balkan culture.

360 On this set of problems: Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols*; Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002).

It is amazing to what extent they influenced scholarly research in communist countries—primarily in the Soviet Union.³⁶¹

Moreover, certain deities and religious concepts claimed by Thracology as having Thracian origin or some special relationship to Thrace quite probably have neither. Apart from Dionysus, this is, according to more recent publications, the case for Sabazios—the “genuinely Thracian” archetype of Dionysus. His homeland is clearly Anatolia, and his cult did not have much in common with Dionysus.³⁶² The last detail also contradicts the old cliché about the ancient Thracian-Phrygian cultural unity. The same is true of the ethno-linguistic kinship: recent studies of the Phrygian language have rejected the idea of its proximity to Thracian.³⁶³ The “belief in immortality,” deemed so typical for Thracians, with their “contempt of death” and “joy to die”: these are instead *topoi* of ancient Greek literature that were used to describe not only the “courageous character” of Thracians but also other “barbarian” populations, such as the Celts.³⁶⁴ Regarding the famous Thracian Horseman, some studies rejected his status of deity, on the basis of observations found in the older scholarship as well (in works by scholars such as Seure, Apostolidis, Mihaylov). The issue is an iconographic convention representing the heroization of the deceased that existed in the Greek context, mostly in Asia Minor. From there it spread into Thrace from the third to the second century BCE. According to a Romanian author, the Greek-Anatolian origin of the iconography is “incontestable.”³⁶⁵ Similarly, a Bulgarian scholar recently criticized the idea that the Thracian Horseman was a syncretic “all-purpose god” and

361 At a certain point, Alexander Fol and some of his colleagues realized the risks hidden in the ethnic concept of “Indo-Europeans” and started talking about “paleo-Balkan and Anatolian ethnocultural communities,” etc.: Popov, *Trakologiya*, 267. But despite the modification of the terms, the imageries are intact.

362 Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 233, citing Isabelle Tassignon, “Sabazios dans les panthéons des cités d’Asie Mineure,” *Kernos* 11 (1998): 189–209, and other publications.

363 To a certain extent, this is recognized today by Bulgarian scholars, although quite reluctantly: see Kiril Yordanov and Maya Vassileva’s introduction to *Thracians and Phrygians: Problems of Parallelism*, eds. Numan Tuna, Zeynep Aktüre and Maggie Lynch (Ankara: METU, 1998). Page 5: “Recent progress in archaeological and epigraphic Phrygian research, however, has changed to a great extent the attitude toward this range of problems [the Thracian-Phrygian kinship]. Hellenic and Anatolian perspectives dominate most recent interpretations of the Phrygian data.”

364 See Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade*, 428.

365 Maria Alexandrescu-Vianu, “Remarques sur l’héroïsation thrace,” *Dialogues d’histoire ancienne* 6 (1980): 101–111.

emphasized that it was a Greek iconographic convention.³⁶⁶ Finally, the Thracian stone-built chamber tombs from the Classical and the Hellenistic period—the ones that were supposed to be the product of a purely “autochthonous” development from primitive dolmens—are most likely the result of Greek-Persian syncretic know-how from Western Anatolia as well.³⁶⁷

These and similar data and conclusions actually tend to restore the legitimacy of the Hellenocentric point of view that both Bulgarian and Romanian scholars opposed. In many cases, this seems to be the most reasonable solution: our information about Thracian religion and “spirituality” comes from Greek (and Latin) literary sources, and it is often difficult or impossible to decide what is “Thracian” in these data and what is a specific Greek perception of the Other. Yet the absence of “purely Thracian” elements in one or another context does not mean that there are “purely Greek” elements. As the examples of the Thracian Horseman and the chamber tombs show, often the influences and the interactions are more complex, and the “Oriental,” Anatolian, Persian and other elements should not be underestimated. This remark indeed puts the Thracians back into the larger “Balkan-Anatolian” context claimed by the Bulgarian Thracologists, yet not necessarily as the key protagonist they imagined.

All that does not mean that methodologically up-to-date investigations of ancient Thracian societies, languages and cults are impossible. Throughout this text, a number of such studies have been quoted. However, such research necessarily entails the destruction of accumulated fictions set forth since the nineteenth century by scholars from Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and, in general, from Europe.

366 Nora Dimitrova, “Inscriptions and Iconography in the Monuments of the Thracian Rider,” *Hesperia* 71 (2002): 209–229.

367 This time, this is the opinion of a professional Thracologist: Maya Vassileva, “Achaemenid Interfaces: Thracian and Anatolian Representations of Elite Status,” *Bollettino di Archeologia on line. Volume speciale* (2010): 37–46, at http://www.google.gr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CCoQFJAA&url=http%3A%2F%2F151.12.58.75%2Farcheologia%2Fbao_document%2Farticoli%2F4_Vassileva_paper.pdf&ei=i6cFuFqQoAOp4ATo-YH1Bg&usg=AFQjCNfb5K1eA7CUJxbliBJGW6RRyOhpEQ&sig2=MC69qgcQ6Sbnp8C3Gjnzfg&bvm=bv.41524429,d.bGE (accessed on January 20, 2013).

The Afterlife of a Commonwealth: Narratives of Byzantium in the National Historiographies of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania

Diana Mishkova

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that the medieval history of the Balkan societies and states was largely shaped in and by their relations with Byzantium, the Eastern Roman Empire. As political entities they were formed on a territory that had for centuries been Byzantine provinces, and in time began to challenge the Empire's political supremacy there, while the Byzantine cultural, political and institutional influence was extremely strong. Thus many aspects of the medieval past of the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Romanians are the direct outcome of interactions between these peoples and Byzantium. In fact, most historians of the Balkans would maintain that their nations' modern history also bears, to a greater or lesser extent, the hallmark of these political and cultural entanglements.

This chapter deals with the national interpretations of the impact of the Byzantine Empire and the Byzantine legacy in the historiographies of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania—countries once belonging to the Byzantine political and cultural orbit.¹ Its purpose is not the examination of the Balkan traditions, or the Balkan “history,” of Byzantine studies per se, which is an interesting and worthy but secondary task here. While accounting for the gradual institutionalization and the directions these studies took, the purpose of this chapter is to look into the various projections or appropriations of Byzantium in the national narratives and the assessments of its role and effects by the national historiographies in the region. In 1932 the eminent Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, who coined the celebrated formula “*Byzance après Byzance*” in order to capture the centuries-old “survivals” of Byzantine culture and institutions in the Balkans, denoted the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 as the endpoint of this legacy—of “*l’immuable pérennité byzantine*” that had outlived the collapse of the empire by more than four centuries. In many respects, however, the emergence of the modern Balkan nations and sovereign

1 I would like to thank Roumen Daskalov, Alex-Drace Francis and especially Tchavdar Marinov for their help in tracking down some valuable sources for this topic.

states in the nineteenth century signaled not the endpoint, but the birth of Byzantium as a *subject* of these nations' history. Its heritage has been variously appropriated or evaluated ever since, occasionally asserting, but more often subverting, the idea of a shared past. The role and impact of the Byzantine Empire became, and remained, a central theme in the national-historical narratives and identity politics for the countries of Southeastern Europe. It was implicated heavily in issues like ethnogenesis and collective identity, historical "rights," national patrimony, culture and "mentality." As such, they were exposed to political and ideological deployment.

The interest in Byzantium and its legacy emerged simultaneously with and was closely linked with the interest in the medieval precursors of the Balkan nation-states—an interest itself bolstered by the projects of national awakening and modern state-building. Consequently, Byzantine history—and Byzantine studies generally—long remained subsidiary to or subsumed under the medieval national histories: discussion of it was largely reserved for the occasions when the bilateral relations between the respective medieval nation/state and the Empire were at issue. And since most of these national histories, on the one hand, had evolved within the Byzantine political and cultural sphere and were thus constructed in tandem with the history of the Empire and, on the other hand, depended heavily on Byzantine sources, it has often been argued that the explorations into the national medieval past have contributed considerably to the study of the Byzantine past.² But this "incentive" also imposed a particular perspective in the field: for most of the time since the nineteenth century, Byzantine history has constituted, methodologically if not always institutionally, an essential part of the Balkan national historiographies, and Byzantium and its legacy were, and still are, interpreted from discrete national points of view.

It is conventional to see Southeastern Europe as comprising a fundamental part of what Dimitri Obolenski famously called the Byzantine Commonwealth—a community cutting across linguistic and ethnic boundaries and united by Byzantine traditions and Orthodoxy. Obolenski's term, emphasizing the symbolic geography of Byzantium's political and cultural influence, is useful for our purposes. For however one may interpret the effects of the relations between the Empire and the medieval Balkan states, it is beyond doubt that for a millennium Byzantium exerted a profound impact on their political, juridical and religious concepts and organization and their spiritual

2 See, for example, Ivan Dujčev, "Les études byzantines chez les Slaves méridionaux et occidentaux depuis le XVII^e siècle," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 78–79.

and material culture. My aim, again, is not to trace the *actual* survivals of this commonwealth—their continuity and metamorphoses—after the collapse of the Byzantine polity in 1453.³ It is to show the ways this Byzantine impact and legacy was perceived, interpreted and constructed by the historiographies of the modern Balkan “successor states”—that is, of those tracing their roots back to the polities that participated in the historical Byzantine sphere. While it is largely agreed today that the history and culture of the Byzantine Empire constitute an inherently multicultural field of research,⁴ in the countries occupying its historical area, Byzantine culture and legacy were the subject of (usually warring) national interpretations. Moreover, in some cases, such as that of the Greeks, that culture and legacy still form an assimilated part of the national history.

At the core of the different systems of appropriating Byzantium (and Byzantinism) lay two central themes: those concerning national identity (or

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- 3 The question of Byzantium's *survivances* is an old one for students of the Byzantine Empire and for those concerned with their national effect. Nicolae Iorga, who will be referred to in the present text, is considered the great initiator in this area. Examples from works that are considered classics include: some observations in the conclusion to Charles Diehl's *Byzance. Grandeur et Décadence* (1928); a brief chapter, “The Debt of the Slavs to Byzantium,” in Norman Baynes' *The Byzantine Empire* (1925); in the collective volume *Byzantium: An Introduction to East Roman Civilization*, eds. Norman Baynes and H.St.L.B. Moss (Oxford, 1948), the question of the heritage is addressed in “Byzantium and Islam” (A.A. Vasiliev); “The Byzantine Inheritance in South-Eastern Europe” (William Miller); “Byzantium and the Slavs” (Steven Runciman); “The Byzantine Inheritance in Russia” (Baron Meyendorff and N. Baynes). The final edition of A.A. Vasiliev's *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324–1453* (1952) includes a chapter devoted to “Byzantium and the Italian Renaissance.” Dimitri Obolensky's *The Byzantine Inheritance of Eastern Europe* (London, 1982) is an important reference in discussions of the Byzantine Commonwealth's afterlife. More recently, L. Clucas, *The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe* (New York, 1988), Igor Ševčenko, *Byzantium and the Slavs in Letters and Culture* (Cambridge and Napoli, 1991) and J.J. Yiannias, *The Byzantine Tradition After the Fall of Constantinople* (Charlottesville and London, 1991), are devoted primarily to the Byzantine heritage in Russia and Greece. Dimitrios Stamatopoulos' *To Vyzantio meta to Ethnos. To provlima tis synecheias stis valkanikes istoriografies* (Athens: Alexandria, 2009) examines late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century narratives of Byzantium by selecting a confined number of authors and ordering them in contrasting pairs representative of the “canonical” and the “deviating” versions of these narratives. A collection devoted specifically to Southeastern Europe appeared freshly: *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est à l'époque moderne et contemporaine*, eds. Olivier Delouis, Anne Couderc et Petre Guran (Athens: Ecole française d'Athènes, 2013).
 - 4 Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack, “Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8.

character) and those concerning national expansion (or the nation's mission). Subsequently, the discourses that made use of Byzantium permeated a number of disciplines. The "Byzantine factor" is found in various areas of scholarly activity: historiography, literature, philology, theology, architecture, the visual arts, music. But they all draw cognitive validity from history, which puts historiography in a "strategic" position in the field. At the same time, the national schools of medieval and Byzantine studies, as we will see, were often suffused with "meta-political" messages, thus blurring the boundary between public (or political-ideological) and academic discourses.

It is therefore obvious that the modern national representations of Byzantium in the individual Balkan historiographies cannot be treated as monolithic wholes reflecting some overarching consensual narratives about the past. Accordingly, my intention in what follows is to bring to the surface the internal contestations, tensions and dialogue between different interpretations within the given national historiographical tradition and their transnational communication in the region and with Western academic currents. These will be analyzed against the backdrop of and in conjunction with changing political, geopolitical and social contexts. The field thus charted is vast, including four national historiographies across two centuries of development. Although varying in degree, the presence of the "Byzantine factor" in all national histories—either that of the medieval period or in historical syntheses—and the frequent "national references" in the specialized literature on Byzantium proper call for rigorous selection of the sources. Rather than offering an exhaustive survey, I have sought to dig up and present in some depth a representative sample of authors whose writings can help us capture and explain the dynamics of Byzantium's "presence" in the histories of the Empire's heirs.

To allow the major patterns to emerge, the chronological purview of the analysis has been kept wide, emphasizing trends and perspective rather than detail. It has been organized around several historiographical "eras" marked by paradigm shifts in the writing of history or broader intellectual currents: pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment perspectives; the Romantic era; the late-nineteenth-century turn towards critical ("scientific") historiography and the institutionalization of Byzantine studies; and the interwar period. Not all of these periods present epistemological ruptures, and we often encounter considerable overlapping and "contamination" between periods. But each of them was characterized by a discursive shift, employing different sets of concepts and projecting different "expectations" from the knowledge of the past. The post-World War II narrations have been left out of the scope of this chapter for reasons of size and depth. The author has given preference to conveying the

actual “voices” of the protagonists and heeding the readers’ “feel” for the arguments put forward, rather than to a chronologically exhaustive but necessarily succinct recording of the major directions of interpretations. An attempt has thus been made to strike a middle ground between a broad overview, covering the formative phase and the institutionalization of historical and Byzantine studies, and an in-depth case study of the main sources in an effort to unravel the actual motivating forces and stakes of the debate within a broader transnational framework.

The salience of Byzantium with respect to national symbolism and representation was not the same during the different periods in the different countries. The Romantic era was decisive in devising the hegemonic interpretations of Byzantium in the Greek and the Bulgarian narratives. However, it was far less important in the Romanian and the Serbian cases, where the “critical” historiography, especially during the interwar period, made far greater contributions in this respect. Hence different weight (and space) has been assigned to the various periods in the analysis that follows.

The “Age of Erudition”

Byzantium is a latecomer to European historiography.⁵ Following its fall to the Ottomans in 1453, the history of the Empire evoked scant interest in the Latin West and among the humanists of the Renaissance. Western interest, philological and historical, in the Byzantine world and its heritage originated in the sixteenth century, initially in Italy. Its stimuli were primarily political (the threat from the expanding Ottoman state that served to arouse interest in Byzantine accounts of the Turks, which in turn led to probing into the Eastern Roman imperial past), humanistic (the discovery of the Greek and the Byzantine worlds), and religious (the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation vis-à-vis the Eastern Orthodox doctrine). The flourishing of Byzantine studies in seventeenth-century France was directly connected with the development of French absolutist monarchic ideology and France’s particularly strong diplo-

5 Initial scholarly research in the Byzantine Empire arose from interest in the classical world. The first scholar to recognize the distinctive quality of Byzantine history was the German historian Hieronymus Wolf (1516–1580), who was also the first to use the term “Byzantine” for the later years of the Roman Empire in his collection of historical sources *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae* (1557). The term comes from “Byzantium,” the name of the city of Constantinople before it became Constantine’s capital.

matic and economic relations with the Ottoman Empire.⁶ Closely connected with this political historical interest was the study of the Greek language in its various forms and historical evolution—an interest again “tied in with the very immediate demands of the cultural politics of the period which produced it.”⁷ Collections of Byzantine sources (*monumenta*) first appeared in the seventeenth century and rapidly increased from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. An early example is the *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae* (Paris 1645–1711).

Until the eighteenth century the historiography of Byzantium closely followed the theological, dynastic and annalistic traditions. The historical narratives of the Empire, in the best case, remained focused on the history of emperors, wars and intrigues. The greatest achievement of the humanists of the “Age of Erudition” was the collection of and critical philological work on the sources. According to Agostino Pertusi, the erudite studies on Byzantine history and civilization, which had begun in Italy and Germany and spread to France during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, accumulated an impressive amount of materials ready to be used for a monumental work: a history of the millennial Byzantine “civilization.” The rationalism and the skepticism of the Age of Enlightenment transformed this potential into a history of the millennial “decadence” of the Empire. One had to wait until the nineteenth century for the erudite research of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to bear fruit and for the new science of Byzantine studies, freed of prejudices and contradicting the presumptions of the enlightened rationalists, to acknowledge the value of the Byzantine world.⁸

In Russia the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries also saw a revived interest in the history of the Greek Orthodox world. But here, too, this interest was neither purely academic nor unequivocal. The attitude of Muscovite society to Byzantium and its legacy was marked by what Dimitri Obolensky defined as an “ambiguous blend of attraction and repulsion,” and Byzantine history was put to highly selective, didactic and tendentious use in support of power politics or ecclesiastical reform.⁹

6 L. Bréhier, “Le développement d’études d’histoire byzantine du XVII^e au XX^e siècle,” *La Revue d’Auvergne* (January–February 1901), 1–36; Panagiotis A. Agapitos, “Byzantine Literature and Greek Philologists in the Nineteenth Century,” *Classica et Mediaevalia* 43 (1992), 234.

7 Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack, “Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7.

8 Agostino Pertusi, “Le siècle de l’erudition,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 25.

9 Dimitri Obolensky, “Modern Russian Attitudes to Byzantium,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 62–63.

Before the late eighteenth century, the interest in Byzantium in the countries that were part of its heritage in the period of Ottoman control was far weaker and tallied with the long-standing tradition of ecclesiastical history and theological literature. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was some interest among the Greek-speaking literati in editing and publishing Byzantine manuscripts. However, this interest was directed towards certain philological and religious aspects of Byzantine intellectual activity and hardly entailed a systematic engagement with, let alone serious exploration and interpretation of, Byzantine history.¹⁰

Byzantium in the Historiography of the Enlightenment

“By the Enlightenment, *Aufklärung*,” R.G. Collingwood wrote, “is meant that endeavour . . . to secularize every department of human life.”¹¹ In this polemical drive towards all-encompassing secularization, not only the medieval church and clergy but the Middle Ages itself were treated as meaningless. It was from these premises that Byzantium came to be evaluated, most resoundingly in the works of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Schlözer and Gibbon.¹² For Voltaire, Byzantine history was nothing but “a worthless collection of declamations and miracles, a disgrace for the human mind.”¹³ Montesquieu’s *Reflections on the Causes of the Greatness and Fall of the Romans* (1734), and *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788) by Edward Gibbon, founder of scholarly Byzantine studies in Great Britain, gave expression to the revulsion and “rationalist” hostility many Enlightenment thinkers felt for absolutism and the politics of the medieval Church, both Eastern and Western. For Montesquieu, Voltaire and Gibbon, the decline of the Roman Empire ensued from the spread of Christianity.

For Enlightenment thought generally, Byzantium was the epitome of everything the Age of Reason stood against: despotism, religious fanaticism, corruption, ignorance. From the positions of his evolutionary theory of historical progress, G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) considered Byzantium a historical aberration.

10 See in this respect Effi Gazi, *Scientific National History: The Greek Case in Comparative Perspective (1850–1920)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 67–68, note 38.

11 R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 76.

12 See André Guillou, “Le siècle des Lumières,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 27–39.

13 Voltaire, *Le pyrrhonisme de l'histoire*, chap. 15, quoted in A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 6.

tion. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, he saw the “general aspect” of Byzantine history as presenting

a disgusting picture of imbecility; wretched, nay, insane passions, stifle the growth of all that is noble in thoughts, deeds, and persons. Rebellion on the part of generals, depositions of the Emperors by means or through the intrigues of the courtiers, assassinations or poisoning of the Emperors by their own wives and sons, women surrendering themselves to lusts and abominations of all kinds.

Byzantine history, Hegel added, “exhibits to us a millennial series of uninterrupted crimes, weaknesses, basenesses and want of principle.”¹⁴

The opposite side of this contempt for Byzantium (and the “East”) was the absolute admiration and idealization of Greek antiquity, where the “West” believed its cultural origins were located—an ideological view that was not confined to the Enlightenment period but infused most of the Romantic and post-Romantic historical literature devoted to the cultural genealogy of “Europe.”¹⁵

In eighteenth-century Russia, Byzantine history continued to be used as a weapon in the debate over specific policies in church and state rather than as a field of erudite research. In a vein reminiscent of Voltaire or Gibbon, Peter the Great blamed the bigotry of the Byzantine emperors, Byzantine monasticism, civil disobedience and treachery for the unenviable fate of the Empire.¹⁶ Since the 1770s, stimulated by Catherine the Great’s expansionist policies (as epitomized by the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji of 1774 and her “Greek project” of 1782), interest in Byzantine history and the collection and publication of sources had been increasing. Pioneering these studies were a number of German academicians who settled in Russia in the latter half of the

14 G. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (London, 1857), 352. Quoted in Dimitar G. Angelov, “Byzantinism: The Imaginary and Real Heritage of Byzantium in Southeastern Europe,” in *New Approaches to Balkan Studies*, eds. Dimitris Keridis et al. (Dulles, VA: Brassey’s, 2003), 9.

15 See, among others, René Canat, *L'Hellénisme des romantiques*, 3 vols. (Paris: Didier, 1951, 1953, 1955); Romilly Jenkins, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980). On the reception of classical antiquity in the West since the eighteenth century in opposition to the East, see Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 1, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785–1985* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

16 Dimitri Obolensky, “Modern Russian Attitudes to Byzantium,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 63.

eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century—G.S. Bayer, G.F. Müller, A.L. von Schlözer, J.G. Stritter, J.P. Krug and A.A. Kunik.

The late-Enlightenment period in the Balkans set the stage for what later became known as “national awakenings”—a process undertaken by a handful of “enlightened” clergymen and internationally connected intellectuals that centered on the creation of national historical narratives, national languages and national folklore. And if the search for the historical roots of these nations-in-the-making reached back to ancient times, their emergence as real “subjects of history” in the then-prevalent, Hegelian understanding of the term—that is, as political entities or centralized states—was firmly located in the Middle Ages. The Greeks were an exception to this rule, a fact that confronted the “Neohellenic enlighteners” with specific challenges that would ultimately be solved by the full appropriation of Byzantium as a “Greek state.”

Generally speaking, the particulars—geographic, social and political—of the process of medieval state-building, as well as certain methodological shifts in the writing of history, put Byzantium at different removes from the core of the respective national historical narratives. Due to its proximity to Constantinople, relatively early state formation and territorial expansion, medieval Bulgaria was more intensely and lastingly exposed to direct confrontation with and influences by Byzantium than were the Serbs and especially the Romanians. The historiography of the Enlightenment, on the other hand, paid little attention to questions of continuity per se. It was primarily concerned with issues of genealogy and the search for historical models of the modern organization of society, hence with “revivalism.”¹⁷ These two groups of causes made Byzantium a constant, albeit variously valued, key reference in the Greek and the Bulgarian historical canons already at their inception in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For the Serbian and the Romanian historiographies, the Empire emerged as a powerful factor during the late nineteenth century, when the task of asserting ethnic continuity and historical mission amid growing competition over the “legacy” of the Empire began to loom large on the agenda of the “national historians.”

A vital aspect of our theme, especially for the period of “national awakenings,” is the fact that the historical successor to the Byzantine Empire was the Ottoman Empire. The Ecumenical Patriarchate itself—the intact powerful survivor of the Byzantine era—formed an integral part of the Ottoman governing system. This determined in great measure the persisting negative attitude toward Byzantium and its legacy of the revolutionary and most moderate

17 Antonis Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece: Time, Language, Space,” in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Katerina Zacharia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 204–206.

“awakeners,” to which European Enlightenment thought contributed with arguments about the “anti-European” and “regressive” nature of both empires.

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Present-day Greeks, as Alexis Politis recently observed, have great difficulty grasping that the sense of continuity of the Greek nation, as it is widely shared and taught at school, was the invention of the mid-nineteenth century. Most of the founders of modern Greece felt a cultural and political affinity with the ancient Greeks alone and considered the entire Byzantine period to be one of foreign, Roman, rule and subjugation.¹⁸ Domestic and foreign currents fused to give ancient history and culture a pervasive allure to the mind of the “Neohellenic Enlightenment,” which would be only later and rather slowly tempered, though never surpassed, by the Romantic concept of a Greek Byzantium and the notion of historical continuity.

It is just as remarkable that ancient Greece’s prominence in Greek historical awareness was itself only a few decades old. Until the third quarter of the eighteenth century, all the historical works written or available in the Greek-speaking world espoused a strictly Christian perspective on the past, informed by Orthodox providentialism, and observed ecclesiastical patterns of narration, replicating a Byzantine literary tradition and completely omitting ancient Hellenism.¹⁹ Coming from the most socially (and politically) elevated Greek-speaking Christian stratum of Ottoman society, Phanariot literary culture and historiography is revealing in this sense: the world it was concerned with was not that of *ellinismos*, but of Orthodoxy, with its center in Constantinople, and it was this world that it sought to recreate and that the Christians sought to regain.²⁰ In the traditional historiography, Byzantium constituted the immediate and obvious historical past of the Ottoman Empire and its Christian subjects. From around the 1770s things began to change, as

18 Alexis Politis, “From Christian Roman Emperors to the Glorious Greek Ancestors,” in *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, eds. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (Farnham and Burlington, 1998), 1.

19 Alexis Politis, *ibid.*, 4–5. The author quotes several examples of this kind of history, of which the following is particularly eloquent: “The good God sent St Constantine and founded a Christian kingdom, and the Christians had this kingdom for one thousand one hundred and fifty years. Then God took the kingdom from the Christians and brought the Turk from the East and gave it to him for our own good . . . For God knew that the other kingdoms do harm to our faith and that the Turk harms us not . . . and God has the Turk as our guard dog”—quoted in *ibid.*, 6.

20 Cyril Mango, “The Phanariots and the Byzantine Tradition,” in *The Struggle for Greek Independence*, ed. Richard Clogg (London: Macmillan, 1973), 49–55.

can be seen in the writings of the Phanariot Dimitrios Katartzis (ca. 1730–1807), an exponent of enlightened despotism and an enthusiast of the *Encyclopédie* and the French *philosophes*. Katartzis is said to be the first to systematically use the term *ethnos* in the singular and to make a clear distinction between the (genealogy of the) Greek-speaking *Romaioi* and the other Christian subject peoples of the Ottomans. Among the illustrious ancestors of the *Romaioi*, he counted Pericles and Themistocles as well as (the Byzantine emperors and military leaders) Theodosius, Belisarius, Narses, the Boulgaroktonos [“Bulgar-Slayer,” the nickname of Emperor Basil II] and Tsimiskes.²¹ Significantly, the descent thus purported did not translate into national (self-)identification: Katartzis posited the existence not of a “Hellenic” but of a “Roman” nation, since religion for him was a much more important criterion of identity than language.²² The Greek-speaking clergymen and historians living in Wallachia, Dimitrie (Daniel) Phillipides and Gr. Konstantas, and Rigas Velesinlis—the long-haired harbinger of revolution and democracy in the Balkans—present interesting “hybrid” cases fusing ecumenist and nationalist visions. The first two contemplated an empire of “enlightened despotism,” freed from the Ottomans by Russian intervention in the Balkans. At the same time, they also spoke favorably of Alexander the Great and introduced the key notion that latter-day “national historians” would use to bring about a re-evaluation of Byzantium in the Greeks’ historical consciousness—namely, the notion that what took place in Byzantium was the “Hellenization” of the Romans. “Those Romans who emigrated to Constantinople abandoned the Roman language and mores and Hellenized themselves.”²³ The celebrated manifestos of Rigas Velesinlis, *Great Map of Greece* and *Constitution*, published in 1797, present a similar compound of different worldviews. Their phraseology is of unmistakable Western aspiration: Rigas speaks of a “Hellenic Republic” and of the “People descended from the ancient Hellenes,” not of *Romaioi*. But this republic and this people was meant to include “Rumeli, Asia Minor, the

21 Anna Tabaki, “Historiographie et identité nationale dans le Sud-Est de l’Europe (xviii^e siècle—début du xix^e). Antiquité et Byzance dans l’exemple grec,” *Etudes balkaniques* 4 (2007), 90–91; Alexis Politis, “From Christian Roman Emperors,” 7.

22 Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque. L’apport de Spyridon Zambélios (1815–1881)* (Athens: Institut de Recherches Néohelléniques, 2005), 59–60. As Koubourlis adds, “from this point of view, what separates ‘us’ from the ancient ‘Hellenes’ is more essential than what links ‘us’ to them” (60). See also Paschalis Kitromilides, “‘Imagined Communities’ and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans,” *European History Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1989), 153–154.

23 D. Philippides and Gr. Constantas, *Modern Geography* [in Greek] (Vienna, 1791), 121. Quoted in Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque*, 65.

Mediterranean islands, [and] Vlachobogdania," in other words, the space of the one-time Byzantine Empire. The difference is that religious ecumenism was now replaced by the universalism of human and citizenship rights—"a somewhat dechristianised Byzantine democracy."²⁴ Byzantinism and the "new ideas" sat side by side without apparent tension.

The peaceful coexistence of the Hellenes and the Byzantines did not last long, however, and from the early 1790s onwards, with the Enlightenment anti-medievalist indictments (from Montesquieu, Voltaire, Le Beau and later Gibbon) and the national ideas resonating ever more strongly, the "decline" of Byzantium proceeded alongside the "rise" of the ancient Greeks. For about half a century, the ideal of national purity eclipsed that of historical continuity. Following an anonymous translation of Montesquieu's *Researches into the Progress and Fall of the Romans* (1795), Adamantios Korais (1748–1833) issued, in 1798—the year Napoleon landed in Egypt—a furious denunciation of the lawlessness, greed, bloodiness and theological dependency of the "Greco-Roman kings." "The despots transplanted from ancient Rome [the Byzantine emperors]," he wrote a few years later, "after frittering away, by an administration that was as stupid as it was tyrannical, all the resources of society, hindering the influence of the best climate, defiling and shattering their throne by the most frightful crimes, ended up delivering you to even more stupid and more ferocious tyrants."²⁵ What Korais actually did was to transform the Byzantine state into "a medieval version of the Ottoman Empire."²⁶

The "Orientalizing" of the Byzantines reached its peak during the Greek War of Independence, when Korais castigated the disastrous Byzantine emperors for wishing to acquire the trappings of the Persian and Parthian courts and establishing a court of truly Asiatic luxury. The "church of the monks" was for him a resort for idlers, and the patriarchs of Constantinople cynical manipulators just like his contemporary Phanariots. Indeed, Byzantine emperors, patriarchs and clergy, Ottoman sultans and Phanariots were lumped together in a single parasitic group sapping the material and mental resources of the Greek

24 Rhigas Velestinlis, "Revolutionary Proclamation (1797)," in *The Movement for Greek Independence, 1770–1821: A Collection of Documents*, ed. and trans. Richard Clogg (London: Macmillan, 1976), 149; Cyril Mango, "The Phanariots," 57; Anna Tabaki, "Historiographie et identité," 91–92.

25 Quoted in Dionysios A. Zakythinis, "Le point de vue des épigones," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 92. Korais, a philologist by vocation, spent most of his life in Paris, which augmented his impact on the intellectual life of his home country.

26 Panagiotis A. Agapitos, "Byzantine Literature and Greek Philologists in the Nineteenth Century," *Classica et Medievalia* 63 (1992), 238.

nation. The Turks, however, were credited with having saved the Greeks from both the Byzantine nobles and the papal yoke.²⁷ All this, on the other hand, fit well with not only the heroic neo-classicism disseminated by the Greek War of Independence but also its social undertones and the democratic and anti-clerical leanings of many Greek intellectuals at the time. For the only true but very powerful remnant of Byzantium in the life of the Greeks (and the other Balkan populations) at that time was the Constantinople-based Orthodox Church, which formed an integral part of the power elite of the Ottoman state. The multiethnic character of the empire (hence the “impure” language of Byzantine literature) was another feature distasteful to the father of Greek liberal nationalism.²⁸ The anti-clericalism and nationalism of the rationalist enlighteners thus logically led them to deplore Byzantium and its legacy.

In the end, Korais’s writings depicted the Byzantines as oppressors of the Greeks, as were the Macedonian kings before that, because they had “relegated the Greek nation to barbarism.” By imitating the barbarian Orient rather than the classical Hellenes, the Greco-Roman emperors paved the way for Byzantium’s ultimate surrender to a wholly Oriental conqueror. The name *Romaioi* (or *Romioi*), which the modern Greeks commonly used to designate themselves, was a shameful testimony to their centuries-long enslavement by the Romans (and also, by implication, the Byzantines), so it had to be eliminated and replaced by *Graikoi*—a name that was, according to Korais, older even than “Hellenes” and one by which the Greeks were known in Europe. Significantly, it was Gibbon whom Korais amply cited to verify his polemic against the Byzantine oppressors.²⁹

Korais set the tone for a series of writings where Byzantium was presented as the antithesis of ancient Hellas—an embodiment of corruption, debauchery and decadence, of foreign domination and tyranny by Roman emperors, church hierarchs and wealthy notables. In a speech on the Acropolis in 1841, Iakovos Rizos Neroulos, president of the Athens Archaeological Society and a government minister, portrayed Byzantine history as “a very long and almost

27 Peter Mackridge, “Byzantium and the Greek Language Question in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, eds. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 1998), 50.

28 Ibid., 52.

29 Sterios Fassoulakis, “Gibbon’s Influence on Korais,” in *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol*, eds. Roderick Beaton and Charlotte Roueché (Aldershot and Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 169–173. The suggestion to use *Graikoi* rather than *Romaioi* or *Ellenes* was first made by Evgenios Voulgaris in 1768 for the same reasons that Korais later adduced.

uniform series of foolish and shameful violations of the Roman Empire transplanted to Byzantium. It is the ignominious exemplar of the extreme wretchedness and debasement of the Greeks.”³⁰ Most of the Greek intelligentsia in the first half of the nineteenth century—the Hellenized representatives of the Enlightenment—were committed to divulging the ancient roots of the modern Greeks and the links between modern and ancient Greece, almost completely rejecting the Byzantine and Ottoman past. Official historiography squarely confronted popular “myth-memories” of the Byzantine past bequeathed by a long-standing religious tradition.³¹ Parallel to these intellectual efforts, place names were changed from medieval to (often allegedly) ancient ones, medieval monuments and Byzantine churches were destroyed, and “the language question” emerged, to remain unresolved for the next century and a half. Ancient history thus directly shaped Greece’s modern development.

As we have seen, however, the immense symbolic value of Hellas and the myth of an eternal Greece were not produced by the “Greeks” themselves: they were cultural constructions of Western civilization. Europeans, moreover, found their idealized cultural ancestors in ancient Greece—the original and indigenous “Ur-Europa,” which they saw as imbued with the key values of modernity. Two were the momentous consequences of these entanglements for the emerging Greek state and identity. European Philhellenic thought had led the Greeks to believe that they were different from the other ethnic groups with whom they had been living for centuries, in that their nation had a universally accepted civilized status which set them apart not only from the Ottoman barbarians but also from the other national entities in the Balkans. Cultural Hellenization of these other nations meant, in this perspective, their taking the side of progress, rationality and truth.³² On the other hand, Europe’s essentialist interpretation of its cultural origin and disdain for the Byzantine Empire meant that Greece’s self-identification involved, more dramatically than in other cases, a choice between the West and the non-West, “Europe” and “Asia,” progress and decadence. Much as the aura of grandeur surrounding Greekness

30 Quoted in Effi Gazi, *Scientific National History: The Greek Case in Comparative Perspective (1850–1920)*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 68.

31 Marios Hatzopoulos, “Receiving Byzantium in Early Modern Greece (1820s–1840s),” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 219–229.

32 Constantine Tsoukalas, “European Modernity and Greek National Identity,” *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 1, no. 1 (1999), 7–14. In his famous 1844 speech on the “Great Idea of Hellenism,” Ioannis Kolletis spoke not only of liberating “our still oppressed brothers” but also of the necessity for the Greeks to “civilize [again] the East” on the one-time example of Alexander the Great—a popular formula of contemporary colonialism (Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque*, 28).

was imported from abroad, so was the horror of being wholly Oriental. Next to the effort to dissociate the new state from its Ottoman past, the reception of the Western model of cultural history, juxtaposing an idealized ancient Greece with the East, determined modern Greece's wholesale initial self-identification with classical antiquity and the West. "By accepting Western culture," Markos Renieris wrote in 1842, "Greece does not renounce its national spirit but rather fulfils it."³³ There was thus a striking convergence of the exigencies of the Greek national emancipation, state-building and legitimation—in brief, Greek nationalism, the expected returns from Western Philhellenism (and Orientalism), and the intellectual dispositions and political values of the late Enlightenment. These different threads were woven together in a historical narrative featuring a resurrected "progressive" Greece after twenty centuries of slavery and darkness and infused with strong anti-Byzantine sentiments.

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Ever since the Enlightenment, interpretations of the relations with Byzantium have stood at the heart of the Bulgarian historical narrative. This is not hard to explain since for seven centuries the Bulgarian *ethnos*, statehood and culture were being formed in constant close interaction and frequent political confrontation with the Byzantine Empire.

The Bulgarian state emerged at the end of the seventh century as a result of the Bulgars, a relatively small but well-organized Turanic tribe from Central Asia, subjugating the Slavs who inhabited the eastern Balkans. This was the first durable barbarian state set up on the lands of the Byzantine Empire. Already before their Christianization, the Bulgarians³⁴ managed to expand their territory, taking over large areas of formerly Byzantine possessions. In 864, after a lost war with the Empire, Prince Boris I (852–889) was compelled to adopt Christianity from Constantinople rather than Rome—a decision that paid off with the setting up of an autocephalous Bulgarian Church and later Patriarchate but that also opened the way for the penetration of Byzantine temporal and ecclesiastical influence. Under Boris's son, Simeon (893–927), the spread of Byzantine culture continued through the introduction of church services in the Slavic language (Old Church Slavonic) and the dissemination of Slavic writing and literature, which crowned the work of two Byzantine missionaries, Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius, and their disciples, and

33 Quoted in Panagiotis A. Agapitos, "Byzantine Literature," 236.

34 In a relatively short time the numerically preponderant Slavic population in the new state assimilated their "state-creating" conquerors demographically and culturally but kept the latter's ethnic name and that of their state.

were championed by the (increasingly Byzantinized) Bulgarian court. The Christianized South Slavs (Bulgarians and Serbs) thus gained an important instrument for establishing permanent states and sustaining individual identities. At the same time Simeon engaged in a protracted struggle with Byzantium for hegemony over Southeastern Europe and, by claiming the title of *basileus kai autokrator* of the Bulgarians and the Romans, made plain his intention to take over the Empire.

The Byzantine *reconquista* of the late tenth and early eleventh century led to the annihilation of the Bulgarian state, turning it into a province under the direct military and administrative control of Constantinople for almost two centuries. In 1186 an uprising against the weakened Byzantium led to the formation of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. However, waning Byzantine political control did not mean fading cultural influence: feeding on the conditions created during the long Byzantine rule, this influence continued to expand until almost the very end of Bulgarian state independence (1396) under the onslaught of the Ottoman Turks.

Predictably, therefore, medieval Bulgarian culture and much of the modern Bulgarian identity—religion, literary heritage, state and historical traditions, art—bear imprints of the civilizational entanglement with Byzantium. In both politics and culture, the Empire was an overwhelming presence and a powerful standard-bearer for the medieval Bulgarian state. Indeed, Byzantium has shaped the Bulgarians' historical canon and self-perception as much as it has shaped that of the Greeks. "Our close proximity to Byzantium," wrote an eminent Bulgarian historian, "charted the directions of our entire medieval life; its influence on us determined, as regards both state and culture, our historical destiny."³⁵ But the interpretations and valuations of this key presence by the Bulgarian and the Greek historiographies are very different.

The national movement of the Bulgarians, it should be remembered, was directed not only against the Ottomans as political masters but also against the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the high clergy, who were (linguistically) either Greek or Hellenized. To the Ecumenical Patriarchate's position as an integral part of the Ottoman system of administration—the common ground for not only the Balkan enlighteners' but also some lower clerics' critical attitude to it—was added, in the age of nationalism, its imputed "anti-Bulgarian," "Greek" character. The Bulgarian "Revival" began largely as a reaction against "Hellenism" and evolved into a struggle against the "Greek" Church and cultural assimilation. The notion of the "double yoke"—political (Turkish) and spiritual (Greek)—became a common trope in the crusade for national mobilization.

35 Petăr Mutafchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite* (Sofia: BAN, 1987), 24.

The early modern Bulgarian historical narrative of the second half of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, still largely anchored in traditional (providentialist) visions, was similar in its treatment of Byzantium to that of the contemporary Greek enlighteners, but for very different reasons. For monk Paisiy Hilendarski (1722–1773), later hailed as the first Bulgarian national “awakener,” the Bulgarians’ chief enemy during their historical peak in the Middle Ages was the “Greeks,” i.e. the Byzantines. His primary aim was to discredit Greek insinuations that the Bulgarians had always been an amorphous ethnic mass subjugated to the Greeks, to demonstrate that they had had their own state, church and high culture, and to show that the military might of Byzantium and the brilliance of its culture were fraudulent. In his *Slavobulgarian History* (1762), Paisiy presented the “Greek emperors” as deceitful and ruthless; they had often been overpowered by the Bulgarian tsars and forced to pay a tribute. Their domination over the Bulgarians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, won by deceit rather than valor, was branded a “Greek yoke.” Paisiy also blamed them for the Ottoman conquest, as they called on the Turks to fight the Bulgarians.³⁶

Paisiy made no effort to discriminate between the Byzantines and the contemporary Greeks and referred to the “Eastern Greek Empire,” “Greek emperors” and “Greek land” when writing about the Eastern Roman Empire. That was a convenient conflation. Paisiy and his followers reproduced the medieval convention of using “Greek” as a synonym for “Byzantine,” but they gave it an ethnic meaning that it originally lacked. This “re-signification” was instrumental in mobilizing the Bulgarians’ resentment towards the contemporary Greeks by pointing to the age-old confrontation between the two nations.

Why was King Simeon Labas illustrious? Because he waged a severe and unremitting war against the Greek kings and always beat them. Four times he went to Constantinople with an army and seized and burned many areas. During his reign for thirty-five years Bulgarians and Greeks had no peace. From that time much enmity and condemnation remained between Greeks and Bulgarians—and [it continues] until this day.³⁷

The anxieties of the present provided the view of the past: the cultural (and political) role of the “Greek Church” was identified with that of Byzantium, and the ongoing nationalist strife with the Greeks was seen as the legacy (or

36 Paisiy Hilendarski, *Slavyanobălgarska istoriya* (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1972), 43–44.

37 Paisiy Hilendarski, *Slavyanobălgarska istoriya*, 234–235.

the extension) of the confrontation between the medieval Bulgarian state and the Eastern Roman Empire.

In hindsight it can be argued that Paisiy's rather simplistic and crude representation supplied the matrix for the subsequent historical accounts. In its fundamentals, especially in portraying Byzantium as the eternal nemesis of the Bulgarians, it proved remarkably stable. The next, Romantic period in Bulgarian history would add new aspects without changing it.

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In many ways the Serbs' relations with Byzantium were no less crucial to their medieval history. But in addition to the relatively late foundation of a Serbian state, hence political confrontation with the empire, there was one more important difference. Byzantium was not the only gravitational center for the Serbs; much more intensely and palpably than medieval Bulgaria, the Serbs experienced the rival political and cultural impact of Rome.

Between their settlement in the western parts of the Balkans (in parts of today's Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Montenegro and western Serbia) in the first half of the seventh century and the Byzantine subjugation of the Bulgarian Kingdom in the eleventh century, the Serbian tribes' contact zone with Byzantium was reduced to the Adriatic coast. For about three centuries the empire had practically no direct control over the interior of the Balkan peninsula, while the Bulgarian Kingdom (which included the lands of present-day Serbia) barred its access to the western provinces. As a result, the Christianization of the Serbs came about only gradually, over more than a century, and was carried out by the Dalmatian bishoprics administered by Rome. The Byzantine traits that the Serbs had taken on since the late ninth century, most notably the spread of Orthodox Christianity and the Slavic church service, were largely mediated by the Bulgarians. After the defeat of the First Bulgarian Kingdom in 1018, Byzantium regained its effective control on the peninsula, whereby the Serbs acquired a long frontier with Byzantium for the first time and much of the territory inhabited by Serbs came under the jurisdiction of the "Greek" archbishopric of Ochrid. In political terms, until the second half of the twelfth century, local Serbian military leaders, *župans*, had made several attempts at establishing more consolidated polities, but the results proved ephemeral. Of these "proto-states" only two endured for somewhat long periods—Serbia (later also called Raška) in the interior and Zeta (Montenegro) on the Adriatic seacoast. Both felt the political impact of Constantinople, yet the grand *župan* of Zeta received his royal title from Rome (1077). The second half of the twelfth century saw the rise of the Nemanjić dynasty, "the only true

Serbian dynasty in the Middle Ages,” under which the Serbian medieval state reached its political peak. Serbian medieval state-building, similar to that of the Bulgarians, took place in a context of alternating alliances and wars with Byzantium, although most of the time Serbia was in a vassal relationship with Constantinople. But the Latin South (centered on Dubrovnik) and West posed a greater threat to the Serbian centralization and the Orthodox ecclesiastical structure that the Nemanjić sought to foster.

From around the mid-twelfth century, taking advantage of the conflict between Byzantium and Hungary, the Nemanjić dynasty extended its power over a large territory in the western Balkans, including Raška and Zeta (but not Bosnia). As in Bulgaria a few centuries earlier, the new ruling dynasty embarked on a continuous effort to attain as much independence and legitimacy as it could wrest from Constantinople and Rome.³⁸ In this it went down a well-worn path: following the Crusaders’ capture of Constantinople in 1204, the Patriarch (then residing in the Empire of Nicaea) endorsed the founding of an autocephalous Serbian Church (1219), while the first king of Serbia—Stefan the First-Crowned (*Prvovenčani*)—received his title from Rome (1217). Medieval Serbia reached the height of its political power and territorial expansion under Tsar Stefan Dušan (1331–1355), whose empire incorporated large tracts of formerly Byzantine lands. Dušan claimed that the Njemanjić dynasty originated with Constantine the Great, proclaimed himself emperor of the Serbs and the Greeks (“*car Srba i Grka*”) while elevating the Serbian church to the rank of a patriarchate, and opened the doors of his court wide to Byzantine influence. However, at the hands of his heirs and contenders, this Serbian empire quickly disintegrated into a number of short-lived states.³⁹

Within this framework, charted mainly by political events and institutional evolution, various interpretations about the actual place of Byzantium in the Serbian history and culture emerged, often in conjunction with a corresponding treatment of the role of the “West.” For the Serbian enlighteners this was not yet a central issue: in addition to the paucity of information for the period until the thirteenth century, this first generation of national awakeners was busy attesting to and emphasizing above all the strength and achievements of Stefan Dušan’s empire. The major adversary in this story was Byzantium; Rome, the “Latins” and the Muslims followed suit. Yet unlike the Bulgarians, the Serbs in the Middle Ages, as Konstantin Jireček had long noted, “were at

38 Throughout the twelfth century, despite its attempts to get rid of Byzantium’s tutelage, Serbia remained a vassal state to the empire, whose rulers were treated by Constantinople as imperial functionaries who could be “removed from office” or conferred titles of the Byzantine court.

39 *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1981), 197–211, 251–262.

different times allies, vassals, rivals and opponents of the Byzantines, but never direct subjects of the emperors of Constantinople.”⁴⁰ And since in the formation of the modern Serbian identity the confrontation with the Greeks played a far lesser role, Byzantium never acquired the explicitly negative features and the harmful role it was assigned in Bulgarian historiography. The overriding theme in the Serbian historical narrative during not only the Enlightenment but also the Romantic period was different: the capacity of the Serbs’ rising and fresh forces to take over the decaying Eastern Roman Empire and found on its ruins their own, Serbian (or Greco-Serbian) empire. In this scenario the Serbs were endowed with the potential to lead a new “Serbian Byzantium” that would fuse Byzantine imperial and historical traditions with Slav vitality and energy.

Jovan Rajić (1726–1801), considered the “founder of Serbian historiography,” wrote the *History of the Various Slavic Peoples, Particularly the Bulgarians, the Croats and the Serbs* (1794–1795). This 2000-page work followed the medieval religious historiographical tradition and was influenced by, among others, Caesar Baronius’s *Annales Ecclesiastici* and Mavro Orbini’s *Il regno de gli Slavi*. Using Byzantine sources as well but in Latin translations, Rajić’s *History* chronicles the political relations between Byzantium and the South Slavs, treated as a particular entity. Next to the importance of Byzantine sources for Serbian history, the latter’s close connection with Byzantium was thus acknowledged from the dawn of Serbian historiography. However, before the second half of the nineteenth century, the nature and effect of these relations, and the Empire’s influence in general, failed to attract the interest of the Serbian historians.

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The Latin origin of the Romanians was as central to their modern historical consciousness as Hellenic origins were to the Greeks. And, like the Greeks, the Romanians thus developed a claim to a privileged position in the community of civilized peoples and to partake in the groundwork of European civilization.

The Romanians discovered their Latin origins over a century before the Greeks discovered their Hellenic roots. Since the seventeenth century the question about the formation of the Romanian people had “become a constant, and even obsessive, preoccupation of Romanian historiography.”⁴¹ Its mythological point of reference was Rome, which fused the two major components of the European tradition—the imperial and the Christian—and lent the Romanian lands nobility and prestige. The story behind it was simple: at the beginning of

40 Konstantin Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1922; first published 1911), v.

41 Lucian Boia, *Romania: Borderland of Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 31–32.

the second century CE, Emperor Trajan had conquered ancient Dacia and his armies had colonized it, annihilating or else completely assimilating the indigenous Dacian population. Byzantium within this framework was seen as an extension and perpetuation of the Roman model—a powerful yet derivative symbol overshadowed by Rome.

The humanist writers of seventeenth-century Moldavia and Wallachia, Grigore Ureche (ca. 1590/95–1647), Miron Costin (1633–1691), Nicolae Costin (ca. 1660–1712), Radu Popescu (ca. 1658–1729), Constantin Cantacuzene (ca. 1640–1716) and “the most brilliant of all humanists,” the Moldavian prince Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723), are considered to be “the real founders of national Romanian historiography.”⁴² They were the first to emphasize the greatness of the early Romanians and to engage in the process with the Byzantine sources on Romanian history and Romanian-Byzantine relations. The attitude to Byzantium that transpires from their writings is one of attachment to the memory of the Empire and its civilization. They remained faithful to the traditional view of Byzantium as the lawful continuation of the Roman Empire, the guardian of the Orthodox faith and possessor of political legitimacy. In the same breath they would emphasize the important role of the Romanians in this Byzantine world, their “nobility” and the legitimacy of their political autonomy: Cantemir, for example, sought to prove the Byzantine ancestry of the Romanian states and dynasties as well as the Romanians’ decisive role in founding the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. “In the spirit of the Romanian humanists of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century,” maintains the Romanian Byzantinist Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, “the idea about Orthodox solidarity and the nostalgia for the Byzantine Empire goes along with a very strong feeling of national identity that acquires an important Byzantine dimension.”⁴³

The Latinist orientation of Romanian historiography diverged considerably from this humanist tradition. Its heyday, like that of the Hellenic orientation of Greek historiography, was during the Enlightenment era and was epitomized by what was known as the Transylvanian (or Latinist) school—an intellectual and political movement whose purely Romanian project dominated Romanian history-writing from the late eighteenth century through the 1860s. The three great historians of the Transylvanian School, the Uniate

42 Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, “L’image roumaine de Byzance à l’époque des Lumières,” in *South-East Europe: The Ambiguous Definitions of a Space*, eds. Răzvan Theodorescu and L.C. Barrows (Bucharest: UNESCO-CEPES, 2002), 50.

43 Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, “Byzance dans la conscience historique des Roumains,” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, 269–271, eds. Delouis et al.; idem, “L’image roumaine de Byzance,” 54.

(Catholic of the Eastern Rite) clergymen Samuil Micu (1745–1806), Petru Major (1761–1821) and Gheorghe Șincai (1754–1816), took up the task of demonstrating the Latin purity of the Romanian race. Much like the Neohellenic enlighteners around the same time, their aspiration was to rehabilitate Romanian culture and Romanian ethnicity as ancient, native, established and respectable.⁴⁴ In Dacia and the area south of the Danube, the Romanians were *the* Romans of the one-time Empire of Trajan. Samuil Micu began the history of his people (1800) with the foundation of Rome, and many after him also presented it as a continuation of Roman history.⁴⁵ The dominance of the Latinists in the historiographical canon-building not only in Transylvania but also in Wallachia and Moldavia until the last quarter of the nineteenth century set the framework for the interpretation of Byzantine history during this period.

Despite some nuances, Micu, Șincai and Maior shared essentially the same ideas about the identity of Byzantium, its civilization and its relations with the Romanians. These ideas were informed by Enlightenment nationalism and a determination to assert the Latin origins of the Romanians. Gheorghe Șincai's *Chronicle of the Romans and of Other Peoples* (1807–1809) and Petru Maior's *Early History of the Romans in Dacia* (1812) articulate clearly the new image of Byzantium emerging through these lenses, which would dominate Romanian political thought in subsequent decades. For Șincai a "Byzantine Empire" properly speaking never existed: neither the transfer of the capital from Rome to Constantinople nor the division of the Empire into western and eastern parts nor even the fall of the Western Empire had marked the beginning of a Byzantium and its proper history. The event that, according to Șincai and Micu, marked a decisive break in the history of the Roman Empire was the seventh-century invasions of the Bulgarians and the formation of their state. The latter had separated its Latin-speaking citizens (the Romanians) from the body of the eastern part of the Empire and made the Greeks its only masters. From that moment on, the Empire based on Constantinople became a "Greek state," "Romaic," not Roman:

44 In Wallachia this trend was represented by some "Greek" scholars. In his *History of Romania* (1816) and *Geography of Romania* (1816), the aforementioned Dimitrie Philippide (ca. 1755–1832) spoke of "Romanization" as a key process in the formation of the Romanian nation, closely analogous to the "Hellenization" of the Greek Middle Ages. He argued that the Latin core of the Romanian people was a crucible that absorbed all the barbarian peoples invading the country. Those who had survived, adopting the Romanian way of life, were "Romanized," leaving behind no other traces but a few names.

45 Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 85–89.

After the conquest of the Dacias [*sic*] and Lower Moesia by the Bulgarians, many authors stopped calling the emperors in Constantinople “Romans” [*ai romanilor*] and began calling them “Romaics” [*ai romaichilor*], as the present-day Greeks call themselves, because without the help of the Romanians, the Greeks would not have succeeded in inheriting the glory and grandeur of our ancestors. [...] The Greeks... without any justification had given and are giving to themselves the name Romans only because they later managed to capture the Roman empire of the East and to destroy it.⁴⁶

The transformation of the Roman Empire into the Byzantine Empire in the seventh century, in other words, meant Greek usurpation of the name “Roman” and of the role of custodians of the empire—usurpation that provoked the angry reactions of the Romanian national historians. The name and identity they bestowed on Byzantium was that of an “Eastern Empire” or simply “the East,” “kingdom of the Greeks or the Romaic” or “the Greeks.” Following a different route, the Romanian enlighteners thus came to a view that was identical to that of their Bulgarian counterparts and which underscored the allogeneic, culturally and ethnically Greek character of Byzantium.

Like their Bulgarian counterparts, the Transylvanian enlighteners held in low regard the “Greek Church” and post-Byzantine and contemporary Greek culture, and they saw the Phanariots as remnants of Byzantium. The national underpinnings of this anti-Greek attitude were similar: resistance against both the foreign Phanariot regime and the budding Greek nationalism.⁴⁷ The narrative procedure was also similar—projecting on a distant past controversies unfolding in the present, occasionally through absurd fabrications: “It is not surprising that Saints Cyril and Methodius refused to submit to Patriarch Photius, since he was a Greek, while they, as genuine Romanians, descendants of the colonists of Trajan... who were associated with the Bulgarians, could not bear to have the Greeks as their masters.”⁴⁸ Against this backdrop the fall of Byzantium was portrayed as a just punishment for the Greeks, who had sinned by usurping the Eastern Roman Empire at the expense of its legitimate heirs—the Romanians.

The breach in the erstwhile humanist tradition is obvious: the Latinist school in Romanian historiography rebutted the Roman authenticity of the

46 Quoted in Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii. Eseuri, studii, articole* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Pro, 2003), 189–191.

47 Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii*, 198.

48 Șincai as cited in Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii*, 211.

Eastern Empire and declared that the Romanians incarnated this authenticity and the legitimacy of the Empire's heirs. And as a sympathetic Romanian analyst put it, "they were the first to pose as a criterion for judging the Greek Byzantine Empire and Orthodox Byzantium the fidelity to the Roman origins which it claimed."⁴⁹

The Latinist historiographic school deserves our attention for yet another reason directly linked with Byzantine history: the important role it attributed to the Romance-language-speaking population south of the Danube. This focus was largely forced upon them by the paucity of sources referring to the area north of the river (the territory of the future principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia) between the withdrawal of Roman rule in 271 and the foundation of the Romanian states in the fourteenth century. During this "dark millennium" the focus of Romanian history shifted to the territory of the "New Rome" and, after the seventh century, to that of the Bulgarian Kingdom. The national Romanian historians unanimously held that Romanians and Bulgarians enjoyed a political symbiosis in the Middle Ages: both the First Bulgarian Kingdom (seventh to tenth centuries) and the second one (twelfth to fourteenth centuries) were said to be "Romanian-Bulgarian kingdoms." For Micu, the Romans who fell under the influence of the Bulgarian state and Slav civilization were transformed into "Vlachs." This name was given to them by the Greeks, who wanted to preserve for themselves the name "Romans" as a symbol of political legitimacy, denying it to the Romanians and the Italians. Șincai, Micu and Maior discovered a multitude of "crypto-Romanians" hiding in the Byzantine sources "under the name of Bulgars, Coumans, and Pechenegs" as well as Scythians. The situation with the term "Vlachs" was completely different, though. As Petre Maior put it, "the name of the Vlachs never meant anything else but Romanians, that is Romans, Latins, Italians."⁵⁰ They were widely dispersed under these various names across the whole Balkan peninsula, from Thessaly and Pindus to ancient Dacia and beyond. Their political force, Micu argued, was displayed by the numerous Vlach uprisings against the Byzantines,

49 Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, "L'image roumaine de Byzance," 72.

50 L. Boia, *History and Myth*, 114–115; Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii*, 166–167, 171, 176, 184–185, 204; Tanașoca, "L'image roumaine de Byzance," 59–65. Petru Maior was particularly inventive in devising explanations for such misnomers. For example, he argued that the Greeks were jealous of the undeniable Romanity of the Romanians and indignant at the creation of the Empire of Charles the Great. Thus the Greeks, who posed as the only legitimate claimants to the Empire and the name "Romans" (*Romaioi*), had changed the Latin name of the Romanians (*Romanî*) to Coumans (*Comani*), taking advantage of the similarity of the letters *k* and *r* in the Greek alphabet! (Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, "L'image roumaine de Byzance," 63).

the most consequential being those of the eleventh and the twelfth centuries which had led to the creation first of a number of autonomous “Dacias” and then of the (second) “Vlacho-Bulgarian Kingdom”—the actual *translatio imperii*. “All roads lead to Rome”: once again the Transylvanian historians were able to demonstrate that the Romanians, not the Greeks (read Byzantines), were the bearers of *the* authentic imperial tradition.

It should have become obvious that the negative interpretation of Byzantium that the Romanian enlighteners shared with their Western peers had different grounds and pursued different goals. It was not driven by a philosophical critique of Oriental despotism, religious fanaticism and corrupted mores; it was driven by a Latinist orientation and the aspiration to reclaim the history of the Vlachs as an integral part of the Romanian nation. Rather than a debauched continuation of the Roman Empire, justified by natural right, Byzantium was the result of a felony, a theft from the Romanians, the rightful heirs of the Roman glory.⁵¹

National-Romantic Visions of Byzantium

The development of historicism since the eighteenth century entailed the discovery of both the “historicity” of the past and the historical reconstruction as a form of communication—currents that the Age of Romanticism brought together and endowed with perfected means of expression.⁵² The rationalist hostility to Byzantium characteristic of Edward Gibbon’s generation was now replaced by the “prurient moralizing hostility” of writers of the Victorian age such as William Lecky, who, in 1869, wrote:

Of that Byzantine empire, the universal verdict of history is that it constitutes, without a single exception, the most thoroughly base and despicable form civilisation has yet assumed. There has been no other enduring civilisation so absolutely destitute of all forms and elements of greatness, and none to which the epithet mean can so emphatically applied . . . The history of the empire is a monotonous story of the

51 See also Leonidas Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei. Preocupări de bizantinistică în România până la 1918* (Bucharest: Omonia, 2005), 372–373.

52 Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*, trans. J.E. Anderson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); Panagiotis A. Agapitos, “Byzantine Literature and Greek Philologists in the Nineteenth Century,” *Classica et Medievalia* 63 (1992), 233–235.

intrigues of priests, eunuchs and women, of poisonings, of conspiracies, of uniform ingratitude.⁵³

For Jacob Burckhardt, the famous nineteenth-century cultural historian of the Italian Renaissance, Byzantinism was a “spirit compounded of Church and politics” that “had developed analogously to Islam.”⁵⁴ Burckhardt saw the spirit of Byzantine civilization in the following way:

At its summit was despotism, infinitely strengthened by the union of churchly and secular dominion; in the place of morality it imposed orthodoxy; in the place of unbridled and demoralized expression of the natural instincts, hypocrisy and pretence; in the face of despotism there was developed greed masquerading as poverty, and deep cunning; in religious art and literature there was an incredible stubbornness in the constant repetition of obsolete motives.⁵⁵

All in all, although Romanticism rehabilitated medieval history, it did not end the West's previous stereotypical (Enlightenment) view of Byzantium, despite some initial signs in this direction.

The Age of Romanticism did not generate a synthetic work, a Romantic *chef d'oeuvre*, on the Byzantine Empire comparable with Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Its impact on the development of modern historiography, however, was decisive in that it embarked on “naturalizing” the Middle Ages as the period of the genesis of modern nations, on nationalizing history and on turning the nation and the national genius into its main protagonists. While these new currents, directly confronting the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment, underlay the inception of the national histories of the Greeks, Bulgarians, Romanians and Serbs, they also stimulated the study of Byzantium and the reassessment of its historical role.⁵⁶

53 William E.H. Lecky, *A History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, vol. 2 (London, 1869), 13–14 (quoted in Jeffreys et al., “Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline,” 8).

54 Jacob Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1943), 202 (quoted in Angelov, “Byzantinism,” 10).

55 Jacob Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949), 345 (quoted in Dimiter G. Angelov, “Byzantinism,” 10).

56 Dionysios Zakythinos, “Du Romantisme au Nationalisme,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 41–47.

The entanglement of the Western European Romantic tradition with these double-edged developments in the Balkans is best seen in the case of Greek historiography. The Greek War of Independence (1821–1828) led to an eruption of Philhellenic sentiments and a corresponding historiographic strain that animated modern Greece's connection with ancient Greece but also aroused interest in the “Greek Middle Ages” and the “medieval Greek empire” (*Imperium graecum, Imperium Graecorum*). In 1824–1825 Claude Fauriel published in Paris *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne* (immediately translated into German by Wilhelm Müller as *Neugriechische Volkslieder* [Leipzig, 1825]). Five years later appeared James Emerson's *The History of Modern Greece from its Conquest by the Romans B.C. 146 to the Present Time* (London, 1830). The decisive turning point in this respect was the appearance of Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer's *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (vols. 1–2, 1830, 1836), to be discussed in detail later. This work claimed that the Greeks of the Byzantine period were linguistically assimilated Slavs and Albanians who had no connection with the ancient Hellenes. Remarkably, the effort to refute its claims marked perhaps the closest convergence of the Romantic Western European and Greek historiographic schools. In 1832 Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen (1803–1863) engaged with a substantial rebuttal of Fallmerayer's thesis and started (but did not finish) writing “a complete history of Greece.”⁵⁷ He reproached the historians of Greece before him that

instead of joining [Byzantine history] with the history of Ancient Greece, [they] rather searched for the most striking contrasts between the two; they thereby lost, quite inevitably, the opportunity for an appreciation of the Byzantine imperial era in purely historical terms.⁵⁸

Zinkeisen's thesis of the continuity of Greek history drew on his Hegelian understanding of the *Geist* of a nation, meaning “the power by which a people emerges by itself as a distinct entity and . . . develops to a higher degree its

57 J.W. Zinkeisen, *Geschichte Grechenlands vom Anfange geschichtlicher Kunde bis auf unsere Tage* (Leipzig: Barth, 1832). In Germany this history was followed in the 1860s by Charles Hopf's synthesis of medieval Greece, *Geschichte Griechenlands vom Beginn des Mittelalters bis auf unsere Zeit* (Leipzig, 1867–1868).

58 J.W. Zinkeisen, *Geschichte Grechenlands*, 7. Quoted in Ioannis Koubourlis, “European Historiographical Influences upon the Young Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos,” in *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism and the Uses of the Past (1797–1896)*, eds. Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 56.

inherent qualities which in turn enable it to sustain its uniqueness . . . ; it is the natural consequence of the descent and original destiny [of the people] . . . ”⁵⁹

The Scottish historian George Finlay (1799–1875), who considered himself to be a historian of the “Greek nation” rather than of the Roman Empire, also stressed the continuity of its history. He opened the preface to the first five volumes of his *History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time B.C. 146 to A.D. 1864* (London, 1877)⁶⁰ with the following statement: “The history of Greece under foreign domination records the degradation and the calamities of the nation which attained the highest degree of civilization in the ancient world. Two thousand years of suffering have not obliterated the national character, nor extinguished the national ambition.” He then went on to stress:

Neither the Roman Caesars, nor the Byzantine emperors, any more than the Frank princes and the Turkish sultans, were able to interrupt the continual transmission of a political inheritance by each generation of the Greek race to its successors . . . They have maintained possession of their country, their language and their social organization. [T]he preservation of their national existence is to be partly attributed to the institutions which they have received from their ancestors. [...] A combination of causes . . . enabled [the Greeks] to preserve their national institutions . . . even after the annihilation of their political existence . . . These local institutions ultimately modified the Roman administration itself, long before the Roman empire ceased to exist; and even though the Greeks were compelled to adopt the civil law and judicial forms of Rome, its political authority in the East was guided by the feelings of the Greeks, and moulded according to Greek customs.⁶¹

So the discourse about the perseverance and vitality of the “national character,” “national ambition,” “national existence” and “national institutions” of the Greeks across centuries despite political calamities, and the portrayal of Byzantium as a Greek empire, were already forged by the foreign historians of Greece before they came to dominate Greek national-Romantic historiography.

59 Ibid., 57.

60 This full edition consists of seven volumes, but most of them had already been published, starting in 1844.

61 G. Finlay, *A History of Greece*, vol. 1, xxii; 20–21. The original publication of volume 1 of Finlay’s *History*, entitled *Greece under the Romans*, appeared in 1844.

Finlay, at the same time, embarked on rehabilitating the history of Byzantium by pointing out, "The views of Byzantine history unfolded in the following pages are frequently in direct opposition to these great authorities [Voltaire and Gibbon]" and indicating that "the splendid achievements of the emperors, and the great merits of the judicial and ecclesiastical establishments will be contrasted with their faults." He associated the transition from the Roman to the Byzantine Empire with its territorial shrinkage, which had ensured "the prevalence of Greek civilisation and the identification of the nationality of the people and the policy of the emperors with the Greek church."⁶²

Thus both as a "positive" adoption of the Western Romantic thesis of national continuity and as a "negative" counterattack against dissident anti-Hellenic Western voices, the impulses coming from "internal" and "external" Romantic interpretations converged to form the core of what was to become Greek national-historical canon. It is noteworthy that to the extent that Byzantium was rehabilitated in the West, this was done on the assumption that it was the heir of Hellenic civilization, and not because it was recognized as a new, composite Christian civilization.

To a great extent Russian Romantic thought was as important for the Balkan Slavs' national awakening and for the discovery of their medieval roots as German, French and English Philhellenism was for the Greeks. It should be stressed, however, that this current itself owed much to Western European Romanticism and to German idealist philosophy. Nowhere was this more evident than in the heated debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles in the 1830s and 1840s, in which Byzantium was evoked by both parties and with different connotations but typically, though not invariably, as the opposite of Western Europe. While Peter Chaadaev, a radical Westernizer, argued in 1829 that the sterility of Russian culture was due to "miserable Byzantium, the object of profound contempt," another leader of the movement and a professional historian, Timofei Granovsky, maintained in 1850, "We received from Constantinople the best part of our national inheritance, that is religious beliefs and the beginnings of education. The Eastern Empire brought young

62 G. Finlay, *A History of Greece*, vol. 1, xv, 352; vol. 2, 8–9. D. Zakythinos defines this as an essentially provincial view of Byzantium, which "risked reducing one of the most salient features of the medieval Greek Empire: its political ecumenism and the universality of its institutions and its culture"—a tendency that was reversed with the appearance of Alfred Rambaud's *L'Empire grec au dixième siècle. Constantin Porphyrogénète* (1870): Dionysios Zakythinos, "Du Romantisme au Nationalisme," 46–47.

Russia into the community of Christian nations.”⁶³ The Slavophiles’ views were just as value-laden and ambiguous. Some of them contrasted the contemplative culture of the Byzantine world with Western legalism and rationalism. Others, even if not denying its spiritual achievements, also stressed the Roman character of the Empire’s law and state, hence its underlying paganism, formalism and institutionalism. “Rome’s juridical chains,” Aleksey Khomyakov wrote, “clasped and choked the life of Byzantium.”⁶⁴

The political underpinnings of the growing Russian interest in Byzantium were signaled by the Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarji (1774) and Catherine II’s “Greek project” (1782). Panslavism, the political offspring of Slavophilism, which grew after the Crimean War (1853–1856), made plain the connection between Byzantinism and the Eastern Question. Nikolay Danilevski argued in his book *Russia and Europe* (1869) that Russia’s historical mission was to restore the Byzantine Empire and dominate Constantinople. To this end he advocated creating a federation consisting of the Slavs, the Greeks, the Romanians and the Magyars, under the political leadership of Russia and with its capital in Constantinople.⁶⁵

An ultra-conservative version of this political view was Konstantin Leontiev’s (1831–1891) highly idiosyncratic reading of what he called “Byzantism” (rather than “Byzantinism”), which he saw as made of several components: political autocracy, Orthodox mysticism and ascetics, and the denial that full moral perfection, equality and freedom could be attained on earth. He also contrasted Byzantism to Slavism and rejected the concept of Slavic cultural unity, arguing that the Greeks, the Romanians and even the Magyars were closer to Russia than the southern and the western Slavs. He nonetheless talked of a Greco-Slavic union, which he also called the “Great Eastern Union,” with its cultural center in Constantinople, which had to be in the personal possession of the Russian tsar. This union would be the political expression of a new “Slavo-Asiatic civilization”—fully original and distinct from that of “Romano-Germanic Europe.”⁶⁶

63 Dimitri Obolenski, “Modern Russian Attitudes to Byzantium,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 63–64. Granovsky also believed that only Slav scholars were fully qualified to unravel Byzantine history and, according to Obolenski, “foreshadowed the emergence twenty years later of a genuine tradition of Russian Byzantine scholarship” (*ibid.*, 64).

64 *Ibid.*, 64.

65 *Ibid.*, 65.

66 Konstantin Leontiev, a writer and philosopher, spent ten years in the Balkans as a diplomat. Even if he shared certain views with the Slavophiles and Panslavists, he did not belong to any of the then socio-philosophical currents in Russia. His cultural-historical

Above and beyond the differences between Slavophiles, Panslavists and philosophers of “reactionary Romanticism” like Leontiev, a common thread in their discussions of Byzantium was its “anti-Western” quality as a *positive* alternative to the Western “model.” Their attitude was driven by their nationalism in that they all associated the Byzantine legacy with the cultural and political identity of Russia. However, this pro-Byzantine nationalist mood did not go unchallenged. The attack, remarkably enough, came from a respectable theologian, Vladimir Solovyov, who argued that Byzantium had betrayed Christ’s legacy to mankind, that it was a “pseudo-Christian Empire” that had succumbed to paganism, schismatics and “Caesaropapism” and was therefore deservedly “judged and condemned by history.”⁶⁷

• • •

The Romantic period in Greek historiography marked “the transition from one mental structure of historical imagination to another: from the schema of revival to one of continuity.”⁶⁸ This entailed, first and foremost, filling the gap between antiquity and modern times—that is, a complete metamorphosis of attitudes towards the “Greek Middle Ages” and Byzantium. It meant not only a radical restructuring of the Greeks’ historical self-narration but perhaps the most striking development to have taken place in Greek national ideology in the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ In the face of the political and social realities in the first decades after the Greek state was set up, the myth of the resurrected Hellas appeared too weak to sustain a national ideology for at least three reasons: it opened a huge time gap between the ideal past and the present, was incompatible with the Orthodox Christian identity of the “living” Greeks, and could not satisfy the ideological and foreign policy needs of the young state. It could be safely said that the emergence of national Greek history was inherently bound up with the integration of the histories of the ancient Macedonians and the Byzantines in a single “general history of the Hellenic nation,” since it “produces not only a homogeneous historical (national) time—without “falls” or temporal gaps—but also a national space by establishing the geographical

outlook is most fully and coherently revealed in his *Byzantism and Slavdom* (1875). See Vladislav Grosul, “Vizantizm Konstantina Leontjeva,” *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Europeenes* 34, no. 3–4 (1996), 265–273.

67 Vladimir Solovyov, *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle* [1889], 5th ed. (Paris, 1922), xxiv–li; “Vizantizm i Rossiya” [1896], in *Sobranie sochineny*, 2nd ed., 7 (St. Petersburg, n.d.), 283–325 (quoted in Obolenski, “Modern Russian Attitudes,” 66).

68 Antonis Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 208.

69 Peter Mackridge, “Byzantium and the Greek Language Question,” 49.

limits of the ideal Greek state.” This integration is thus an essential aspect of the nationalization of Greek history.⁷⁰

Behind this shift of historical references, one can easily discern the shifting political-ideological needs and national objectives originating in the Greek present: the classicist orientation of the enlighteners was closely linked with the ideal of national dignity and liberty; the Byzantinist orientation of the national-Romantic school of historiography pursued national integration—that is, territorial expansion. The Byzantine monarchy was a better symbol for unity and statehood than the ancient city-state and democracy.⁷¹ In 1837 the Athens University’s first dean and professor of history, Konstantinos Schinas, in a direct address to King Otho, noted: “Hellas, your Highness, was never an autonomous and indivisible state, but was first small in size and fought with adjoining states, and then a small province of three successive large monarchies, of which only with that of Byzantium did it have so much as language and faith in common.”⁷² Seven years later, Prime Minister Ioannis Kolletis’s speech in the Greek National Assembly (January 14, 1844) completely obliterated this view of a historically fragmented Hellenism. This speech is generally considered to mark the birth of Greece’s “Great Idea” (*Megali Idea*) and set the frame of the ideological discourse of Greek nationalism. Induced by the rift between “inside” and “outside” Greeks—those living within the frontiers of the state and those left outside it—the “Great Idea” became the ideological platform for the Greek state’s efforts to “absorb” the whole “Hellenic Nation” and expand its boundaries in geographical space and historical time.

Kolletis’s nationalist manifesto remained silent on Byzantium: in the political and intellectual climate of the time, evoking it would have been counter-productive.⁷³ Yet both the ideal of the united nation, bringing together the

70 Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque. L'apport de Spyridon Zambélios (1815–1881)* (Athens: Institut de Recherches Néohelléniques, 2005), 21.

71 “[I]f the Greek nationalists of the time wanted to appropriate Byzantium, it was not because they venerated everything it represented, it was not because they felt particular affection for the Byzantine civilization . . . It was rather because the Byzantine past, like the Macedonian and the Hellenistic past, was useful for the Greek nationalists of the second half of the 19th century as a ‘past of a conqueror’” (Ioannis Koubourlis, “Augustin Thierry et l’hellénisation” de l’Empire byzantine jusqu’à 1853: les dettes des historiographes de la Grèce médiévale et moderne à l’école libérale française,” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 261.

72 Quoted in Despina Christodoulou, “Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography,” in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson (London: Routledge, 2010), 451.

73 Paschalis Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea,” in *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, eds. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 1998), 27.

Greeks from inside and outside the kingdom, and the vision of Greece's cultural and political hegemony in the "Greek East" led the national ideologue in this direction. In 1833 Kolletis argued: "The capital of the Kingdom of Greece must be Constantinople. It is the city where the foundations of the throne of our old emperors are located and the seat of our religion, the city upon which we should all turn our eyes... we should not desire any other capital than Constantinople."⁷⁴ Kolletis's hints were only one step away from the realization that Greece's claim to rule the East from Constantinople entailed the need to demonstrate that the Greeks had already done this in the past.

However, the immediate push to reorient Greek historiography towards Byzantium came from a different quarter. In the 1830s Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790–1861), a German liberal and historian of the Empire of Trebizond and of Frankish Peloponnese, published his *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (vols. 1–2, 1830, 1836). In this work he argued that the massive Slavic invasions of the Byzantine Empire since the late sixth century CE led to total racial assimilation of the Greek population of the Peloponnese. Modern Greeks, according to this theory, were descendants of Slavs—a shocking conclusion for the newly minted Greek nationalism, which not only deprived the Greeks of their illustrious forebears, racial purity and ancient creativity but took away their European credentials as well.⁷⁵ It is noteworthy that Fallmerayer's attitude to Byzantium and its ideological legacy was extremely critical: he denounced both the autocratic emperors of Byzantium and the "reborn" Byzantine autocracy in Russia. In fact, his intention was not to hurt the national feelings of the Greeks but to warn against the danger of a resurrected Greco-Slavic "Byzantine" empire on the Bosphorus subservient to Russia.⁷⁶

What is of interest here is that it was through the endeavor to prove Fallmerayer "wrong" that the medieval "roots" of Greece were discovered and the national Greek historical narrative emerged. Long after this task was accomplished (not without substantial help from Western European scholarship), the Greek historians continued to battle with Fallmerayer. For them it was a battle for the recognition of the "historical rights of Hellenism," which would allow the modern Greeks to reap the benefits of their descent from the

74 Quoted in Christodoulou, "Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography," 450.

75 On Fallmerayer's theory and the Greek reactions, see Georg Veloudis, "Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer und die Entstehung des neugriechischen Historismus," *Südost-Forschungen* 29 (1970), 43–90.

76 Jakob P. Fallmerayer, "Rom und Byzanz," in *Europa zwischen Rom und Byzanz* (Bozen: Athesia, 1990 [1861]).

ancient Greeks and perform the leading role in the geopolitical reshufflings related to the Eastern Question. In this effort, which was both scientific and diplomatic, the interpretation of the Byzantine past became crucial. The “national historian” Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos made all these connections crystal-clear when writing, in 1852, that to admit that “those calling themselves today Hellenes are nothing other than Slavs, Albanians, Bulgarians and Vlachs” is to admit that

the position of the Greek nation in the East is reduced to that of the Serbs and the Montenegrins, and that this nation cannot claim more important rights than those of the nations and races that live among or alongside them. It is obvious, therefore, that the question is not purely scientific, but also political . . . The true and national history of Hellenism in the Middle Ages is not indifferent to its fate in this century.⁷⁷

In brief, the exigencies of forging a coherent—continuous and encompassing—national history and those of legitimating Greek (geo)political ambitions by “historical right” coalesced to impel Greek intellectuals to develop a new historiographical model capable of filling what Konstantinos Dimaras called “the void of Byzantium.” This was an operation that proceeded in stages during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷⁸ It posited three successive eras—ancient, Byzantine and modern—with the Byzantine era as the key to the crystallization of a unified Greek nation, and was the work of at least three generations of scholars, mostly historians. Notable among them are Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1815–1891), his amateur colleague (and literary scholar) Spyridon Zambelios (1815–1881)—“the two founders of the Greek Romantic historiography, namely the two main theoreticians of Neohellenic nationalism,”⁷⁹ and Spyridon Lambros

77 Quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 285; see also *ibid.*, 80–81. It has been credibly argued that it was the Greek rebuttal of Fallmerayer's theories that “sparked off a systematic interest in the history of Byzantium”—see Livanios, “The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism, and Collective Identities in Greece, 1453–1913,” in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Katerina Zacharia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 263.

78 “A cohesive conception of Greek history, representing the fortune of a people maintaining their national existence and consciousness throughout the ages, came to life very late,” wrote the historian Spyridon Lambros in 1918, quoted in Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 207.

79 Constantinos Th. Dimaras, *Neoellēnikos Diafotismos* (Athens: Ermēs, 1993), 464, quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 41.

(1851–1919)—the voice of “critical historiography” in Greece at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

The 1840s and 1850s was the time when this shift in the Greek historical consciousness took place, and it was marked by the parallel existence of contradictory interpretations of the Byzantine past. In 1845, when Th. Manousis and C. Asopios, professors at Athens University, announced the Greek edition of the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (inaugurated by B.G. Niebuhr in 1828), they made the then patently unconventional statement that it was during the Middle Ages that the constitutive elements of the modern Greek nation—its language, religion, private law, mores and customs—took shape. They added that “medieval Greek history” was closer to the Greeks “not only in terms of time, but also [in terms of] interests.”⁸⁰ There were two conspicuous propositions thus being made: that the roots of the “Neohellenic” nation lay not in ancient times but in the Middle Ages—the period from the founding of Constantinople until its fall to the Ottomans—and that this realization had a direct bearing on the political, that is, national, interests of the contemporary Greeks. Significantly, this Medieval Greek era was not (as yet) identified with Byzantium. Even in 1850 one could read in a Greek history textbook that “[Greece], crawling under the despotism of the empires of Rome, Byzantium and Turkey, did not exist as a nation,” and that it was reduced to a province in these empires (which was actually the case).⁸¹ The evolution in both Zambelios’s and Paparrigoloulos’s own views is indicative of the timing and the characteristics of the paradigm shift in the Greek historical canon.

Spyridon Zambelios is the person commonly credited with devising the tripartite schema ancient-medieval-modern and including “Byzantine Hellenism” in it. However, in the first of his two major works, *Folk Songs of Greece* (1852), he makes an emphatic distinction between the Romanism of the “monarchy of Constantinople,” the *basileus* and the court on the one hand, and Hellenism, incarnated in the *demos* and the Church, on the other. To him they presented “two different political histories, one which refers directly to the Roman empire, exclusively relating its fortunes, and, as such, remains completely foreign or at least external to the *ethnos*; and the other . . . refers exclusively to Hellenism, noting the terms of its existence and the levels of its development.”⁸²

80 Quoted in Christina Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques de l'historicité en Grèce (1834–1914)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 316.

81 Quoted in Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques*, 313.

82 Quoted in Despina Christodoulou, “Making Byzantium a Greek Presence: Paparrigopoulos and Koumanoudes Review the Latest History Books,” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 245.

In Zambelios's early interpretation, the Byzantine state preserved the familiar repulsive features that the anti-Byzantine tradition had endowed it with. What changed was that he did not discard the medieval period on this basis as one of total decay, but posited the existence of and sought to reveal the culture of the oppressed people as the actual bearer of Hellenism and "acculturator" of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Engagement with Hegelianism and the French Romantic historical school, itself strongly influenced by German historicism, had a great deal to do with Zambelios's approach to all this. His theory about the Hellenization of the Byzantine Empire and the importance he attributed to the Middle Ages in the general explanatory scheme of Greek national history are steeped in these intellectual traditions. Zambelios's perspective was emphatically teleological: taking 1821, the year of the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence, as the master key to Greek history, he interpreted all preceding eras an inevitable movement towards the formation of a Greek national state. What hitherto was presented as a series of national disasters and conquests—by Romans, Franks and Ottomans—Zambelios turned into necessary steps towards an independent Greece. (Indeed, Zambelios believed that had Gibbon and Montesquieu witnessed 1821, they would have had written very different histories of the Eastern Roman Empire.) In this continuous chain Byzantium was the missing but, for him, crucial link between antiquity and modernity, as well as the actual source of the modern Greek nation.⁸³

In a review of *Folk Songs of Greece*, Paparrigoloulos praised Zambelios for having "understood what very few had understood" by postulating the endurance of Hellenism in the Middle Ages. However, he criticized him for considering "the monarchy in Byzantium to be a *foreign element*, and the only national elements to be the people and the Church."⁸⁴ Five years later (1857), in his second major work, tellingly titled *Byzantine Studies*, Zambelios came up with a considerably altered scheme "with a view to a more Greek interpretation," as he phrased it. The Byzantine monarchy (and not just "medieval Hellenism") was rehabilitated and associated with the intellectual heritage of ancient times, and an organic unity was established between people (and language), religion and state:

83 See Koubourlis, "European Historiographical Influences," 60–61; Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 313–314.

84 Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 284–292; Christodoulou, "Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography," 454.

The Byzantine Middle Age appears once more in its true colours as a system resting firmly on three dominant elements, the ancient Greek, the Christian and the Roman. . . . Instead of the fatalism that hastens the decline and fall of Rome, the operative force in the Byzantine state is the law of Greek intellectual and spiritual revival. This law prevails, to a greater or lesser degree, according to the extent to which each of the three traditions holds its proper place; the ancient Greek tradition uppermost, the Christian tradition in the middle and the Roman lowest.⁸⁵

In 1852 Zambelios forged the term “Helleno-Christian” (*Ellinochristianikos*) to capture this symbiosis, thus uniting two notions that were hitherto (especially during the Byzantine period itself) mutually exclusive. The central idea of “Helleno-Christianity” came to bridge paganism and Eastern Christianity, democratic Hellas and imperial Byzantium, Hellenism and Romanism, but also—in ideological terms—the two separated political worlds of “Modern Hellenism”: that of the “autochthones” (the inhabitants of the Greek Kingdom) and of the “heterochthones” (the Christian subjects of the Sultan).⁸⁶ In 1857 Zambelios firmly implanted the roots of modern Greece in medieval Greece. With this the tripartite scheme of ancient-medieval-modern Hellenism—the backbone of modern Greek historiography ever since—came into place:

The springs of modern Greece...break the surface in the time of Constantine and Theodosius; they seek a more direct and unimpeded channel from the time of Leo the Thracian (457–474) to that of Leo the Isaurian (717–741), and they become an irresistible current in the days of Basil the Macedonian (867–886) and his successors, and from that time onwards they flow straight forward to the revival or our own time.⁸⁷

The key place in the tripartite scheme was thus reserved for the “intermediary”—the “Byzantine traditions, [to which] Greece owes the attachment to religion, the transmission of love for the fatherland, and the preservation

85 Spyridon Zambelios, *Byzantinai meletai peri pēgōn neoellēnikēs ethnotētos apo H. achri I. ekatontaetēridos m. Ch.* (Athens: Nikolaidis Philadelphus, 1857), 33ff, quoted in Zakythinos, *The Making of Modern Greece*, 197.

86 Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 107.

87 Zambelios, *Byzantinai meletai*, 62 ff, quoted in Zakythinos, *The Making of Modern Greece*, 197.

of language”—vital elements for the Greeks’ “happy return to an era of rehabilitation.”⁸⁸

The political implications of these historical speculations transpire compellingly from what D.A. Zakythinos called the mid-nineteenth century “daring vision of the universal Greek empire of the East.” According to Zambelios, this vision highlighted “the fourth age of Greece,” that is, its future:

If ever a New Greece is fated to arise from the ruins of Ancient Greece and Byzantium, two principles will be fused in the nation that will return to life—first, that of the old Greek tradition, bearing also the imprint of the earlier medieval period, and secondly, the principle of the later medieval doctrine of the Nation according to which all the various peoples which made up the Byzantine Orthodox world, when the later Middle Ages began in the ninth century at the time of Basil the Macedonian, will amalgamate to form a single political unit having the same religion.

Within this “great confederation of equal peoples,” Zambelios mused, “the complete fusion of racial elements” may be arrived at.⁸⁹

Zambelios never produced a major historical synthesis that would organically insert Byzantium into the flow of Greek history. That task was left to the Athens University professor of history Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, the creator of the Greek grand narrative. Paparrigopoulos elaborated at length on and fleshed out Zambelios’s tripartite framework, buttressed the national role of Byzantium—the “Greek Empire residing in Constantinople”—and placed this empire back into European history on the premise of the continuity and unity of Hellenism. His early writings from the mid-1840s, significantly enough, were still imbued with the negative late-Enlightenment attitude to Byzantium prevailing at that time. In his first book, *On the Settlement of Certain Slavic Tribes in the Peloponnese* (1843), he described the Byzantine period as the “darkest and most ignorant era,” a “barbaric epoch” and spoke reverently of Gibbon’s “marvellous writings.”⁹⁰ At that time he was convinced that the history of the Byzantine state was not coterminous with what he called the “medieval Greek history.” Therefore Byzantium was not an integral part of (his idea of) Greek history. “Medieval Greek history,” he wrote, “differs very essentially from

88 Spyridon Zambelios, “La poésie populaire en Grèce,” *Le Spectateur de l’Orient* 6 (1856), 238, quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque*, 113.

89 Quoted in Zakythinos, *The Making of Modern Greece*, 200.

90 Koubourlis, “European Historiographical Influences,” 54.

Byzantine history. It is therefore this medieval Greek history that we must teach in detail, not the Byzantine.”⁹¹

Paparrigopoulos’s first book was sparked by the compulsion to refute Fallmerayer. The anti-Slavic hysteria provoked by the Fallmerayer affair coincided, moreover, with the emergence of Bulgarian nationalism and the expansion of the anti-Patriarchalist movement—new phenomena that threatened the realization of the Great Idea and exacerbated the question of the position of the Slavs vis-à-vis the Greek nation. Language as a determinant of ethnicity could, for this reason, no longer serve as a reliable criterion in securing Greece’s political aims. That was the context shaping Paparrigopoulos’s ideas about the edifice of the national history of Greece and the Greeks—and one he saw as his duty to bear upon.

Bringing evidence of “the continuity of the Greek nation across history” was a critical undertaking in this direction. A notable aspect of Paparrigopoulos’s argument is that he did not try to refute the idea of the racial mixture resulting from the settlement of the Slavs. Reversing Fallmerayer’s thesis, however, he argued that the Slavs “were tamed by the Hellenic race and, having adopted its religion and language, they mixed with it.”⁹² As Ioannis Koubourlis has stated, given that the Greek intellectuals could not produce racial nationalism, they had to seek recourse in a nationalism that emphasized “cultural continuity” by connecting the modern Greeks with the ancient via the Byzantine Middle Ages. In an 1846 article the future “national historian” made this strategic choice graphically clear:

The question is not therefore to prove that the modern Hellenic nation descends in a direct line from Pericles and Philopoimen; the battle, as you can see, would have been not only impossible but also futile. What we will, what we have to prove historically is that from the mixture that had been produced and is still being produced between different tribes does not result, as it has been asserted, a brutal, inert and stupid mass, but a nation that contains in itself the elements of a great political existence and, more particularly, that the spirit of Hellenism perpetually animates this new outgrowth of the succession of centuries.⁹³

91 Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 96. Paparrigopoulos at that time also considered the Macedonians to be a distinct nation (*ibid.*, 96–97).

92 Quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 94.

93 “Introduction to the History of the Regeneration of the Greek People” (1846), quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 95.

Paparrigopoulos's five-volume *History of the Greek Nation from the Most Ancient Times until the Present* (published between 1860 and 1874) brought these threads together—intellectual and political, domestic and foreign—in an all-encompassing synthesis. It lay at the core of the Greek historical canon and is considered by some to be “the most important intellectual achievement of nineteenth-century Greece,” which managed to “bring Byzantium and Kolletis's conception of the Great Idea together as components of the political culture of ‘Romantic Hellenism.’”⁹⁴ As in the case with the erstwhile Helladocentric discourse, the said culture was not just a “domestic” Greek product. Paparrigopoulos himself acknowledged his debt to several historians who had attempted to write comprehensive histories of the Greek nation from antiquity to the present: the aforementioned James Emerson, Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen and George Finlay. For Zambelios as well, Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–1884), and German historicism more generally, was another major source of inspiration. As a student of the Hellenistic world, Droysen supplied Paparrigopoulos with numerous arguments about the spread of Hellenic civilization eastwards and, most crucially, with the key concept of the Greek national school of history: Hellenism, denoting in Droysen's (and in his student Otto Abel's) usage a “Hellenic genius,” a *Geist*, with a distinct historical trajectory.⁹⁵

Around the topos of Hellenism, continuously enfolding in time and acquiring a distinct meaning in each period, Paparrigopoulos constructed the monumental “unity” of Greek history. The latter appeared as a teleological succession of Hellenisms—First (Ancient/Classical) Hellenism, Macedonian Hellenism, Christian Hellenism, Medieval Hellenism (the Byzantine Empire), and Modern Hellenism (said to have begun in the thirteenth century). Each marked a specific mission and a specific contribution of the Greek nation to world history without, however, losing its innate identity. As Antonis Liakos has argued, “Paparrigopoulos used the theological concept of the Holy Trinity (the same essence in multiple expressions) as a metaphor for Hellenism: the uniqueness of the perennial nation amidst a multiplicity of temporary Hellenisms.”⁹⁶

94 Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 28. For a summary of Paparrigopoulos's views, see his *Histoire de la civilisation hellénique* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1878).

95 Johann G. Droysen, *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1833); Johann G. Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, 2 vols. (Hamburg: Perthes, 1836–1843). See Koubourlis, “European Historiographical Influences,” 60.

96 Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 211.

Among these various Hellenisms, the Byzantine (or medieval) was not simply one among equals, but the core of Greek history: “to the Byzantine state we owe the conservation of our language, our religion and more generally of our nationality”; “that kingdom saved us from the Slavs, Bulgars, Arabs, Franks.”⁹⁷ Paparrigopoulos pinpointed the outright dangers ensuing from the neglect of this part of “Greek” history: as long as “[the Greeks] talk of [their] medieval fathers in the same way as [they] do about foreigners and recognize as [their] true ancestors only a few like Leonidas and Themistocles,” they abdicate their “will to govern the East” and of being “the sovereigns of a very vast country,” limiting their historical rights to a tiny state—“and this at a time when the Serbs and the Bulgarians . . . are assiduously pressing their historical claims.”⁹⁸ Paparrigopoulos thus made clear that his interest in the Middle Ages and Byzantium was guided by the necessity to lend historical and intellectual legitimacy to Greek irredentism—a commitment the Greek state duly rewarded.⁹⁹

For Paparrigopoulos, Byzantine history became *identical* with national Greek history:

The Greek nation, after its subjugation to the Romans, not only did not lose its language and its traditions, but perpetuated itself by spreading this language and these traditions throughout the whole East. Thus the eastern part of the Roman empire was for a long time entirely Greek; and

97 Quoted in Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 28; Christodoulou, “Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography,” 458. Volumes 3 and 4 of Paparrigopoulos’s *History* covered the Middle Ages until 1204 (the fall of Constantinople to the Latins), while the last volume covered the entire period from 1204 until the War of Independence (1821).

98 Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, *Istoria tou ellinikou ethnous* III (1963), xxii; quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque*, 30. Paschalis Kitromilides contends that as a project for the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire in the shape of a large Greek state, the Great Idea was a late nineteenth-century development and the product of political manipulations of Paparrigopoulos’s theories (“On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 33). He thus seems to play down the extent to which Paparrigopoulos himself helped legitimate, historically and ideologically, this imperial (and imperialist) vision.

99 The Greek state supported large purchases, successive reprints and new editions of the *History* and promoted its distribution (as it did Paparrigopoulos’s schoolbooks), funded its translation into French and offered its author several important positions in state institutions. See Christodoulou, “Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography,” 456.

after the fall of the western part of the Roman Empire... it became a separate kingdom in the East; that kingdom became necessarily Greek.¹⁰⁰

With a good deal of familiarity, he called Byzantium “our medieval kingdom” and “our monarchy.” He called its rulers “our emperors” and “our medieval forefathers.” In this identification there was barely a place for non-Greeks, if not as “races” then certainly as creative elements, because, as Cyril Mango noted, “the essence of Byzantium is seen to reside in its Greekness and its value as an object of study in the survival of that same Greekness, often threatened and obscured, yet always able to reassert itself.”¹⁰¹ But for Paparrigopoulos Byzantium was even more than that, for in it, “polytheism has been replaced by the unity of Christianity; the variety of dialects by the unity of language; the different tribes by the unity of the nation. Fortified in this three-dimensional panoply, the Greek people is struggling to recover its political unity.”¹⁰²

What Paparrigopoulos came up with, therefore, was not simply a Romantic elegy or a lament for Byzantium. His *History* was, in the sympathetic words of Paschalis Kitromilides, “a Greek epic”: it conveyed an appreciation of “the great empire’s most admirable achievement: the unification of the Greek nation... the realization in the bosom of the Christian Empire of that most noble and most elusive of social ideals, national unity, solidarity and cohesion. That greatest of Byzantium’s accomplishments...”¹⁰³ Rather than a shameful incarnation of foreign domination and decay, as the enlighteners had it, Byzantium was now presented as an age of liberty and unity for the Greek nation. Paparrigopoulos thus consecrated the Byzantine Empire as the model and forerunner of the modern Greek state, providing a standard for unity and expansion.

The remarkable outcome of Paparrigopoulos’s *tour de force* was to canonize Byzantium in Greek political thought as “the *telos* to which the Greek state and Greek destinies were expected to strive to approximate” and to establish the

100 Quoted in Roxane D. Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs à la recherche de Byzance* (1860–1912) (Athens: Institut de Recherches Néohelléniques, 2001), 43.

101 Cyril Mango, “Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium, in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, eds. M.E. Mullet and R.D. Scott (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies), 1981, 48.

102 Quoted in Paschalis Kitromilides, “The Dialectic of Intolerance: Ideological Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 6, no. 4 (1979), 13.

103 Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 30. Kitromilides argues that Paparrigopoulos’s *History* supplied a model for the other Balkan historiographical traditions, particularly for the multi-volume historical synthesis of Nicolae Iorga and Vasil Zlatarski (ibid.). This issue will be discussed further down.

image of the Byzantine Empire (before 1204) as “an ideal territorial and geographical model which was felt in Greek political culture to be a pointer to the future destiny and mission of Greece.”¹⁰⁴

The institutionalization of Paparrigopoulos’s scheme did not pass without debate and resistance. The historian Theodoros Manoussis refuted the thesis that Byzantine history was part of the national history of Greece, while Pavlos Kalligas questioned the criteria (language and religion) Paparrigopoulos had used to prove the Hellenism of the Byzantines as well as the connection between Byzantines and modern Greeks. Two other historians, Georges Theophilos and Ioannis Kokkonis, provided evidence about the Christian but not uniquely Greek character of Byzantium.¹⁰⁵ Most substantive was the critique by Dionyssios Therianos (1834–1897), a Greek scholar living in Trieste, whose detached location may have contributed to the sobriety of his views about the perennial nature of Hellenism. Following Manoussis’s theses, Therianos considered the expression “Byzantine Hellenism” to be unconvincing, as it mixed two historically different phenomena. For him the history of the Byzantine Empire and that of the Greek nation were totally distinct, even if he acknowledged the changes that Christianity brought to the Greeks, and argued that the diffusion of Hellenic culture was one of the Byzantine emperors’ lesser preoccupations.¹⁰⁶ However, Paparrigopoulos’s supporters far outnumbered his critics, and the debate had no lasting consequences other than the efforts to provide further “evidence” for his imposing construction.

The dissemination of the new version of Greek history, particularly via education, was a lengthier process. Paparrigopoulos’s 1852 history textbook set the stage for the gradual “assimilation” of Byzantium, but until 1880 this did not entail re-evaluation of Byzantium’s role in and contribution to national and global history. That came about only after 1882, when Paparrigopoulos’s scheme was officially adopted by the new school curriculum, and Byzantium began to be appreciated for preserving the “Greek nationality,” safeguarding and transmitting ancient civilization to its “barbarous neighbors,” and

104 Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 31. As far as the modern Greeks’ political model is concerned, Paparrigopoulos argued that they had followed the Athenians in constructing a parliamentary government but that the Byzantine monarchical form had saved them from the ancients’ disunity (K. Paparrigopoulos, *Istorikai Pragmatiai* [1889], 240–253).

105 Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 44–45.

106 Ibid., 46. Yet another historian, Konstantinos Sathas, suggested that ancient paganism had survived during the Byzantine period, and the Christianization of the Peloponnese was completed only under the Ottoman domination (ibid., 47).

becoming “a guide and teacher of Renaissance Europe.”¹⁰⁷ Yet even in 1893 the state commission for textbook evaluation found it necessary to press for eliminating the convention of presenting the Byzantine state “as an abode of criminals or the insane.” It is also significant that until World War I, national history education assigned to Byzantium the role of “a bridge via which the spirit of [the modern Greeks’] immortal ancestors is transmitted—through the preservation of language—or . . . a hoop linking the history of the descendants to that of the ancestors,” rather than of a creator of proper heritage.¹⁰⁸ The latter portrayal would only gradually take shape in the following decades.

On a different level, the incorporation of Byzantium into the national narrative can be seen as emancipating Greek history from a view about the nature of the Greeks that had been imposed on them by European classicism. But it was also an attempt to redefine Greece’s contribution to Western civilization. The appropriation of Byzantium was thus at once an act of resistance to the Western canon of history and of the desire to participate in it. Entire historical eras, located outside the Western cultural canon and originally suppressed by the Greeks, were now idealized as distinct cultural features and as contributions to universal civilization.¹⁰⁹

To recapitulate: between 1850s and 1880s the Hellenization of Byzantium, mainly via language and the “transcending” assimilative powers of the Greek race, was completed, and by the 1880s the Greek historical canon postulating the continuity of Greek history was firmly in place. For about a century the basic premises of the scheme—at least in the official version of Greek history—would remain intact. Individual scholars and academic schools contributed some bricks to the tripartite edifice of the canon but did not change the overall construction and Byzantium’s central place in it. Indeed, much of the subsequent scholarship was undertaken with the purpose of reinforcing this edifice.

The forging of the Greek national narrative illustrates the embroilment of political and intellectual currents. The choice of Byzantium or classical Greece as historical references was a dilemma originating not in historiography but in politics and ideology. The new national tasks required—and received—new histories. The doctrine of national unity and continuity is a classic case of an ideological construct, in the Mannheimian sense, in that it veiled profound or

107 Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques*, 339–340, 349–350, 359–361.

108 *Ibid.*, 365–366.

109 Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 207–209.

even irreconcilable structural contradictions and cultural antinomies between classical Greece, medieval Christian Byzantium and the Greek nation-state.¹¹⁰

As Christodoulou puts it, “Paparrigopoulos’s unified tripartite schema of national history was overwhelmingly successful on one level: it is how Greeks understand their past today.”¹¹¹ But in another sense it met with failure: the Asia Minor Disaster in 1922 forever buried the Greeks’ vision of a restored “Greek Empire centered on Constantinople.”

...

During the first half of the nineteenth century, medieval Bulgarian history attracted an increasing number of writers. The growing engagement with the medieval past and the Byzantine Empire sprang from pressing questions of the Bulgarians’ present and future that involved the definition of their identity, the outlining of their political borders, and the delimitation of their past. As elsewhere in the region (and beyond), these were questions formulated in the context of the national history that was then under intensive construction.

This mounting interest in the medieval past brought few changes in the general conception of Byzantium set by Paisiy and disseminated through transcripts of his *History*. In contrast to the Greek case, there was a neat continuity between the Enlightenment and Romantic interpretations, the main “difference” being the amplification of anti-Greek associations. Quite suggestive of the actual interaction involved is the fact that most of this historical literature was produced by students of Greek schools (the first Bulgarian-language schools opened only in the 1820s), and some of it was even written in Greek. While advocating the knowledge of Greek as a “noble and quite useful” language, Christaki Pavlovich (1804–1848) reproduced almost literally Paisiy’s narrative: he held “Greek” perfidy and guile responsible for past Bulgarian military defeats, and he attributed the Bulgarian state’s fall to the Ottomans to “Greek treachery.”¹¹²

Ivan Seliminski (1799–1867) was a prominent intellectual and political thinker of the first half of the nineteenth century, a Greek student and par-

110 Paschalis Kitromilides extends this observation to the social and geographical level of the national unity doctrine as well: Paschalis Kitromilides, “‘Imagined Communities’ and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans,” *European History Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1989), 167–168.

111 Christodoulou, “Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography,” 459.

112 Nadya Danova, “Obrazi na gārtsi i zapadnoevropeytsi v bălgarskata knizhnina prez XVIII–XIX vek,” in *Balkanskite identichnosti v bălgarskata kultura*, ed. Nikolay Aretov (Sofia: Kralitsa Mab, 2003), 102–103, 107.

ticipant in the Greek War of Independence. His historical analyses (written in Greek) illustrate the close engagement with contemporary Greek writings, in reference to which the Bulgarian historical narrative began to be fleshed out. Seliminski (like many authors before and after him) considered the Slavs to be the autochthonous population in a territory stretching from Illyria and Moravia to Galicia and Russia, whose “political organization” dated back to 1000 BCE. He affiliated the Bulgarians with these “hundred and twenty million Slavs” bound together by “common nationality, similar language and religion”—a clear replica of (and counterforce to) the “Hellenized East.”¹¹³ Following this line of argument, Seliminski claimed that the Bulgarians’ assaults on Byzantium and occupation of Byzantine lands were not barbarian invasions but acts of “liberation of their enslaved brothers” and punishment for the Byzantine greed for expansion.¹¹⁴ Seliminski questioned whether the greatness of classical antiquity could be attributed to the Greeks. According to him, the ancient Greeks had pirated the achievements of the neighboring “barbarian” peoples—Indians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Thracians and Scythians—whose pupils they were. Therefore “Greece is not a teacher of the West, but only a bridge, via which civilization moved from East to West, from Asia to Europe.” Likewise, the Byzantine Empire was “Roman, not Greek,” since it was inhabited by many peoples with equal rights and its emperors were not Greek. Orthodox Christianity as well was the shared patrimony of all who professed it, and its dissemination owed little to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.¹¹⁵ These views were evidently informed by the contemporary Greek interpretations but were shaped in reaction to them and adjusted to serve a specific subversive claim. Notably, Seliminski was also the first Bulgarian writer to subscribe fully to, and even “improve” on, Fallmerayer’s theory by stating that “there is no pure Greek nation . . . but a rabble of Egyptians, Assyrians, Arabs, Italians, Slavs . . . proved by archaeology and history.”¹¹⁶ In the following decades, as we will shortly see, the thesis about Byzantium’s non-Greek character would be superseded by the opposite one—with an equally “national” agenda in mind.

113 Biblioteka “D-r Iv. Seliminski” (trans. by P. Chilev and E. Pazheva), vol. 3 (1905), 99.

114 Nikolay Kochev, ed., *D-r Ivan Seliminski. Izbrani sǎchineniya* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1979), 158–161.

115 Biblioteka “D-r Iv. Seliminski,” vol. 2 (1904), 96; vol. 5 (1907), 16–17; Kochev, ed., *D-r Ivan Seliminski*, 284–288.

116 Quoted in Yura Konstantinova, “Myths and Pragmatism in the Political Ideology of Ivan Seliminski,” in *Greek-Bulgarian Relations in the Age of National Identity Formation*, eds. Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Anna Tabaki (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, 2010), 174.

Since the 1840s, when Bulgarian resistance to the ecclesiastical control of the Ecumenical Patriarchate began to intensify, condemnations of not only the Greek priesthood but everything Greek increased visibly. The Bulgarian projections of the confrontation with the Patriarchate back to the Byzantine past were direct responses to a thesis already incorporated in the Greek national narrative: that Orthodox Christianity and the Orthodox Church—the most tangible Byzantine legacy—played a crucial role in preserving Greek identity under the Ottomans and preparing the advent of Greek independence. That the Greek national historians extolled the “national clergy” for safeguarding the Greek identity of its flock during the dark centuries of the “Ottoman yoke” was barely original—all national historiographies developed almost identical narratives in this sense. But they also insisted that the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, under whose jurisdiction all Ottoman Orthodox Christians were placed, was inseparably entwined with the national and political history of the Greeks.¹¹⁷ The growing affinities, from the 1850s onwards, between the Greek state’s expansionist scheming and the efforts of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to curtail the nationalist aspirations among its flock, especially in Macedonia, added to the identification between “Greek” Church and Greek irredentism, past and present, in the minds of the Bulgarian patriots.

This explains in large measure why in nineteenth-century Bulgaria, Orthodox Christianity was not perceived as a Byzantine “gift”—as an element of a shared great civilization and a link to the symbolic capital of the Eastern Roman Empire.¹¹⁸ Next to the central place assigned to religion in the emerging national consciousness, the appropriation of the Byzantine Orthodox tradition by the Greeks left little room for the Bulgarians’ identification with it. The reaction was a replay, in a practical sense, of the Greek precedent and, in an ideological sense, of the one established by the medieval Bulgarian state: a “national” Church as a token of sovereignty and a religion bolstering national, not ecumenical, identity. In the 1840s one of the leading Bulgarian intellectuals, Konstantin Fotinov (ca. 1785–1858), coined the expression “Bulgarian religion” (*bolgarskoe veroizpovedanie*)—a formula closely paralleling the contemporary Greek notion of “Helleno-Christianity.”¹¹⁹ There was a similar logic to the idea

117 Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques*, 394–395.

118 On the obstacles to accepting the cultural transfers from Byzantium as a way of partaking in its legacy, see Dessislava Lilova, “L’héritage partagé? Byzance, Fallmerayer et la formation de l’historiographie bulgare au XIX^e s.,” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 325–327.

119 Nadya Danova, *Konstantin Georgiev Fotinov v kulturnoto i ideyno-politicheskoto razvitie na Balkanite prez XIX vek* (Sofia: BAN, 1994), 317.

of the “Slavization” of Cyril and Methodius, the Byzantine missionaries commissioned by the Byzantine emperor to devise an alphabet for the Slavs as a vehicle for spreading Christianity among them. Since the ultimate outcome of their (and their disciples’) mission was the adoption by the Bulgarian state and Church of Slavonic as the official language, the two Byzantine missionaries were hailed as Slavs and “Bulgarian enlighteners”—as having, in the words of Petko Slaveykov, “originated from the Bulgarian people” and performed an apostolic mission on its behalf.¹²⁰ Byzantium’s two major cultural legacies to the Bulgarians—the religion and the Cyrillic alphabet—were thus fully alienated from it and assigned to the national patrimony. The logic of nationality, where religion and language played the key role, largely predetermined this outcome.

The political radicalization of the Bulgarian intelligentsia on the eve of and especially after the Crimean War (1853–1856) stabilized the image of Byzantium as a hostile foreign power. Now some new elements appeared. Byzantium was no longer merely the political rival and oppressor of the Bulgarians. Byzantium and its cultural influence were now held responsible for corrupting the Bulgarian national character and causing deep cleavages in Bulgarian society. Vasil Aprilov (1789–1847), a leading national activist, and Georgi Rakovski (1821–1867), another graduate of Greek schools, a historian, writer and revolutionary, were the first to formulate forcefully this thesis. According to Rakovski, the Christianization of the Bulgarians in the second half of the ninth century and the intermarriages between the Bulgarian and the Byzantine courts led to de-nationalization and social disruption. Since then, along with the Greek mitres and titles, “contagious luxury and debauchery crept into Bulgaria.” The Bulgarian nation gradually began to deteriorate, and intrigues and discord came to reign; only the villagers preserved “the almost primeval innocent nature of the old life.”¹²¹ Lyuben Karavelov (1835–1879), a national-liberal writer and influential journalist, vehemently denied that the Greeks had any right to deem themselves heirs of the ancient Hellenes and often made analogies between Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire in terms of “the opulence of the court . . . the anarchy, despotism, corruption and hubris [of the sultans].” The Bulgarians and the Serbs had led heroic “liberating” wars against “the Byzantine plague, which was infecting everything around it.” Like Rakovski,

120 Lilova, “L’héritage partagé?,” 326. The “Slav origin” of Cyril and Methodius was a unanimously shared assumption at that time and was rarely questioned later.

121 Nadya Danova, “Problemăt za natsionalnata identichnost v uchebnikarskata knizhnina, publitsistikata i istoriografiata prez XVIII–XIX vek,” in *Balkanskite identichnosti*, ed. Aretov, 69–70.

Karavelov did not consider the Bulgarian medieval tsars to have espoused Bulgarian identity and stated that only their pre-Christian predecessors and the “simple ploughmen” had the right to claim it. “Anyone would be disgusted,” he wrote, “by the Byzantine habits and customs that were implanted in our semi-Byzantine tsars.”¹²²

Another major step in this direction was made by Hristo Botev (1848–1876), a poet, essayist and radical democrat. For Botev, Bulgarian medieval history in general, and especially the time of Tsar Simeon, when the First Bulgarian Kingdom reached its political and cultural peak, were “our abominable bygone history.” Neither it nor the medieval Bulgarian tsars embodied Bulgarian identity:

Take a look at the history of the Bulgarian kingdom from Boris [the ruler who adopted Christianity from Byzantium as the official religion in 864] until its fall under the Turks [1396], and you will see that the whole historical-political past of our nation was almost entirely purely Byzantine, that it was inhabited solely by tsars, boyars and clerics, while the people itself was always separated by its deep public morality from the debauchery of its government, debauchery that, along with Christianity, slipped into the higher strata of the population.¹²³

With Christianization the alienation of the Bulgarian elite from the commoners reached its zenith, since the Bulgarian people

was forced to become infected by the sickness of the then rotten and lecherous Byzantium. The constant fight for survival, the [establishment of] family relations of the Bulgarian tsars with the Byzantine emperors, and the adoption of the then-Orthodox-idiotic [*sic*] culture of Byzantium, on the one hand, gave our people no time to develop its national character and create a firm foundation for its future and, on the other hand, detached a part of it and turned it into a Bulgarian aristocracy [that became] notorious for its profligacy and lecherousness. . . . At

122 Lyuben Karavelov, *Săbrani săchineniya*, vol. 7 (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1967), 227, 321, 474–476; vol. 8, 528–529. See also Danova, “Problemăt za natsionalnata identichnost,” 72–76. Karavelov also upheld the theory that the Slav population was autochthonous since “time immemorial,” in “Thrace, Macedonia and Danubian Bulgaria,” Fallmerayer’s thesis and the Bulgarian origins of Emperor Justinian and, of course, of Cyril and Methodius.

123 Hristo Botev, “Narodăt. Vchera, dnes i utre,” *Duma* 1, no. 2 (June 25, 1971), 3 (Hristo Botev, *Săbrani săchineniya*, ed. Michail Dimitrov, vol. 2 [Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1958], 41).

the time of Simeon, that is, the time of Bulgaria's golden age, Bulgaria reached not only the peak of its glory and might, but also the apex of its deadly disease.¹²⁴

The thesis about the split between the elite and the people as a result of the former's "Byzantinization" occupied a key place in the emerging historical (and identitarian) discourse and was propagated by not only the radical but also the moderate wing of the national movement. Like Botev, Petko Slaveykov (1827–1895), an emblematic figure of the Bulgarian cultural revival, believed that from Tsar Simeon and the Bulgarian "Golden Age" onwards, the distance between the democratically organized Slavic communities and the increasingly Hellenized and alienated elite was growing to reach "that ugly anomaly that we see towards the end of our state life": the tsars and nobles, who "had relinquished the people's life," perished under the yataghans of the Ottomans.¹²⁵ This sweeping historical scenario pursued two quite obvious contemporary objectives. On the one hand, it was intended to allude to the ruinous effect that the modern Bulgarian elite's "Hellenization" had on the community. On the other hand, it implied that the Slavs, not the Greeks, were the harbingers of the ideas of equality and democracy and as such were destined to lead humanity towards modernity.¹²⁶

But there was also a third, supposedly less obvious, contemporary reference Botev had in mind when denouncing Byzantium—the effects of the Western European influence on the Bulgarian "self." "Just as by adopting Byzantine culture we displayed ourselves as monkeys and came to be enslaved by Asiatic barbarians," he warned, "so by blindly emulating Europe we will reach the state of being enslaved by ourselves." The Bulgarians first needed to free themselves from "the new Byzantium"—the Ottoman Empire—and "only then borrow from Europe that which we need . . ."¹²⁷ This striking analogy between Byzantine spiritual domination and that of the West, as we will see, would enjoy wide circulation and receive meta-historical support in the radicalized anti-liberal environment of the interwar period.

124 Hristo Botev, "Izlechima li e nashata bolest," *Zname* 1, no. 11 (March 16, 1875), 22 (Botev, *Săbrani săchineniya*, vol. 2, 142).

125 Petko R. Slaveykov, "Polozhenieto," *Makedonia* 3 (March–April 1869); cited in Desislava Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znacheniya na natsionalnoto ime* (Sofia: Prosveta, 2003), 251–252.

126 Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znacheniya*, 253. Both these themes became commonplace in the Bulgarian political press in the 1870s.

127 Botev, "Izlechima li e nashata bolest," loc. cit., 141.

The interpretations discussed so far were not those of professional historians, but they had a decisive impact on both the historical consciousness of the contemporary Bulgarians and the historical narrative under construction. Romantic historiography, as epitomized by the first generation of trained Bulgarian historians, adopted and elaborated on most of these themes, drawing on the up-to-date historiographical approaches, mainly in Russia, where this generation had received its education. Spiridon Palaouзов (1818–1872), the first professional Bulgarian historian trained in the Romantic tradition, expounded the thesis of the disastrous influence of Byzantium and its “ideology”—“Byzantinism” (a term he was the first to use in Bulgarian history-writing)—on not only the medieval Bulgarian state but the South Slavs generally. Their connections with Byzantium,

as a focal point of diverse and unusual elements of citizenship . . . operated to the detriment of their nationality and independent development . . . Are there still gentlemen who . . . believe that decrepit Byzantinism could contain in its bosom the seeds of its future revival? Did the millennial empire . . . ever try to cultivate in itself at least a fraction of those principles on which the edifice of modern civilization grew? Byzantium, set up by a special commandment of God . . . remained immovable, and this immobility it transmitted completely to Turkish Istanbul, the center of the Ottoman Empire, which has preserved intact the character of medieval Byzantinism.¹²⁸

In his book *The Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1858), Palaouзов made almost explicit the connection between the Byzantine Empire, the economic ruin and political venality of the Romanian states under the Phanariots—the “conduits” of Byzantinism—and “the economic and spiritual enslavement” of the Bulgarians imposed by the new Phanariots in his own time.¹²⁹ At the same time, as an acquaintance of Jakob Fallmerayer from the time of his university studies in Munich in 1842–1843, Palaouзов translated some of Fallmerayer’s writings and lent full support to his “Slavic theory.”

The history textbooks reiterated the basic elements of this anti-Byzantinist discourse: the presentation of Byzantium as inhabited by “Greeks”; the harmful impact of Byzantinism on the Bulgarian political and spiritual elite, ultimately leading to subjugation by the Turks; the characterization of the

128 Quoted in Hristo Kolarov and Vasil Gyuzelev, “Spiridon N. Palaouзов kato istorik na sred-novekovna Bălgariya,” *Vekove* 1, no. 6, 1972, 56.

129 Spiridon N. Palaouзов, *Izbrani trudove*, vol. 11 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1977), 408–428.

Byzantine domination of the eleventh and twelfth centuries as a “Byzantine yoke”; and the treatment of the peasants as the only guardians of the “purity” of the national traditions and mores.¹³⁰

All in all, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the openly hostile image of “Byzantinism” was firmly in place. This was a process whereby Bulgarian and Greek historiography mutually, albeit not symmetrically, constituted and reinforced each other. The Bulgarian late-Enlightenment and Romantic narrative traced the origins of the contemporary Greek-Bulgarian struggle for dominance in the Balkans back to the Byzantine era. In time the historiographical myth that Byzantine history was exclusively Greek history was adopted by many Bulgarian scholars in confirmation of their attitude to Byzantium as a Greek power hostile to their nascent nation-state. It set the framework for their interpretations of the Bulgarians’ cultural and political relations with Byzantium in the past and their strivings for independence in the present. Eventually, the Greeks’ imperious appropriation of the Empire’s cultural legacy and their insistence on the medieval roots of the Great Idea reinforced the Bulgarian writers’ rejection of all things Byzantine which Enlightenment thought had originally spurred. Petko R. Slaveykov went so far as to praise the Ottomans for “breaking the neck of proud Byzantium and putting an end, in political life at least, to the Greeks’ aspiration to destroy the Bulgarians.”¹³¹

It is therefore no exaggeration to state that the Bulgarian national historical narrative, with its strong grounding in the medieval era, was largely forged against the backdrop of and in response to the Greeks’ self-identification with the Byzantines. The Hellenization of Byzantium by the Greeks and its Grecization by the Bulgarians were two closely linked processes. The Bulgarians sought to thwart the contemporary national-political claims of the Greeks as derived from the Byzantine legacy less by contesting the Eastern Empire’s Greek character than by downplaying its historical role and prestige—a ploy that drew heavily on Western European Enlightenment imagery—and by

130 Danova, “Obrazi na gärtsi i zapadnoevropeytsi,” 122–123.

131 Petko R. Slaveykov, “Minaloto, segashnoto i budushteto,” *Makedoniya* 3, no. 3 (December 14, 1868), in Petko R. Slaveykov, *Sächineniya*, vol. 6 (Sofia: Bälgarski pisatel, 1980), 176. As a latter-day Bulgarian Byzantinist, Ivan Duychev, wrote: “This lack of objectivity became the main reason for never treating Byzantium, its history and civilization as a truly scientific subject and recognizing all that which the Slavs owe to it in their secular development” (Ivan Duychev, “Les études byzantines chez les Slaves méridionaux et occidentaux depuis le xvii^e siècle,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 [1966], 73–74).

contriving a rival medieval imperial model, that of the Bulgarian kingdom. The identification of the Byzantines with the Greeks (and the Turks) facilitated the transfer of unpleasant qualities from one group to the other. But it also prevented the nineteenth-century Bulgarians from capitalizing on the benefits they had reaped from having been part of the Byzantine ecumene. Bulgaria, the most heavily Byzantinized Balkan country, ended up as the fiercest critic of Byzantium.

The only attempt at appropriating the Byzantine legacy was prompted by the “findings” of Fallmerayer. It is hardly surprising that the Bulgarian national elite took advantage of the opportunity to indicate that “Byzantium owed its mightiness to people with Greek names but Slav blood.”¹³² The scenario was one of a classical zero-sum game: what was taken from the Greeks was bestowed on the Bulgarians. Denying the national endurance of the Greeks was meant to boost Slav vigor and power, and a number of (Hellenized) “Slav” emperors, patriarchs and military leaders (most conspicuously Constantine the Great, Justinian and Belisarius) took the place of the “Greek.” Such was the balance sheet emerging from the historical writings of leading national figures like Vasil Aprilov, Petko Slaveykov, Georgi Rakovski, Marin Drinov and Dragan Manchoy.¹³³

The latter scenario, however, was haunted by an intrinsic defect: apart from the fact that Byzantium was never, at the time or later, accepted as an unequivocal civilizational model, the crucial question that its “Slavic character” raised was how to explain the continuous wars that the Bulgarian kingdom waged against it—epic wars that, as already noted, served not only to assert the existence of a submerged repository of military might and national energy but also to mobilize the Bulgarians against the socially more powerful and culturally self-confident modern Greeks. (An additional “defect” was the apparent assimilability of the Slavs, who had “rejuvenated” the Greek *ethnos* at the cost of losing their Slav identity.)¹³⁴ Bolstered by the magisterial scheme of Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos, the “Grecization” of the Byzantine Empire in the Bulgarian historical writings since Paisiy had a firm nationalist logic and rationale. The Slav “genes” of some eminent Byzantines and the abundance of Slav blood in the veins of the Byzantine commoners would often be mentioned, but the overall “Greek” complexion of the Byzantine state and culture

132 Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znachenia*, 222. Fallmerayer’s theory was propagated by direct translations in the press and by those of his Russian followers, most notably Alexander Hilferding, which also found their way into the school textbooks (*ibid.*).

133 See Danova, “Problemāt za natsionalnata identichnost,” 47–67.

134 Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znachenia*, 222–223.

would not be questioned. With the exception of the interwar historian Petăr Mutařchiev, until after World War II the Bulgarian historians, unlike their Romanian and Serbian counterparts, were not so interested in proving that Byzantium was as much “theirs” as it was “Greek.” Instead, they sought to transpose the “defects” of the Empire, as contrived by the “Europeans,” onto the modern Greeks. For the Bulgarian historical narrative, Byzantium’s ethnic and cultural “strangeness” was instrumental: it made it possible simultaneously to present the medieval confrontation with the Empire as a national one and to justify the contemporary resistance against the “de-nationalizing” policies of the Greeks and “their” Patriarchate. Here we can see the curious linkage of the same (false) argument—that of the Greek identity of the Byzantine Empire—with two warring national causes and the instrumentalization of the same thesis by two conflicting national narratives.

The reverse impact of the Bulgarian perceptions on the Greek historical narrative was less the result of scholarly interpretations than of political realities. Before the mid-nineteenth century the Bulgarians were still perceived as posing no threat to the “irresistible force” of Hellenism, so Greek historical literature barely touched upon them. They were either mentioned briefly under the category of the (tame and hard-working, yet uncivilized) “Slavs” or treated with indifference.¹³⁵ In the early 1850s Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos remained mute on the history of conflicts between Byzantium and the medieval Bulgarian states and preferred to discuss the assimilative power and cultural “superiority” of “Byzantine Hellenism” vis-à-vis the “barbarian elements” and the common struggles of Greeks and Bulgarians against the Latin West. The Bulgarians and the Romanians were seen as the “adopted children” of the “Hellenic nation” in both its historical past and political present.¹³⁶ (The Serbs already had a state since 1830 and were therefore ignored.) The Greek public and scholarly world began to “discover” the Bulgarians as a rival during the late 1850s, in the wake of the Crimean War and in the midst of the new phase of the Eastern Question and the growth of the Bulgarian movement for ecclesiastical

135 Gunnar Hering, “Die Bulgaren in den Schriften griechischer Intellektueller in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Müncher Zeitschrift für Balkankunde* 3 (1980), 47–66; Dimitris Livanios, “Christians, Heroes and Barbarians: Serbs and Bulgarians in the Modern Greek Historical Imagination (1602–1950),” in *Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment*, ed. Dimitris Tziovas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 71–75.

136 Ionnis Koubourlis, “Les Bulgares dans les premiers textes de Constantin Paparrigopoulos et de Spyridon Zambelios,” in *Greek-Bulgarian Relations*, eds. Kitromilides and Tabaki, 137–141, 144.

independence. Paparrigopoulos's *History* marshaled this new attitude by transforming the once-submissive Bulgarians into national enemies of the Hellenic nation, who had provoked incessant conflicts and wars against the medieval bastion of Hellenism, Byzantium. In fact, the increasingly assertive nationalist claims of the Bulgarians (and the Slavs) help explain Paparrigopoulos's re-evaluation of Byzantium.¹³⁷ Following the ecclesiastical schism (1872) and the annexation of Eastern Rumelia by the Bulgarian Principality (1885), the Bulgarians definitively replaced the Turks as the prime enemies of the Greeks. Their alienation from the community of modern Hellenism justified their expulsion from the one-time "people of the *Romaioi*," turning it into a purely "Greek people." In 1877 the first Greek history of medieval Bulgaria, written by N. Kokkonis, set the stage for a new historiographical era with a long future. The book described Bulgarian medieval history as an endless series of murders and acts of pillaging and destruction, and the Bulgarians as lacking "national spirit"—a "deficit" that proved particularly hurtful to their budding national awareness. Henceforth the contention that the Bulgarians lacked a sense of nationality and that their nationalism was defective would become a recurrent theme in Greek historiography.¹³⁸ Efforts to refute this contention would propel much of the "scientific" Bulgarian historiography starting in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

...

Greek-Serbian relations in the nineteenth century presented a different picture. The Serbs' political emancipation, contemporaneous with the Greek one, was not perceived as harming Greece's interests, and Serbian irredentism did not clash seriously with Greek irredentism; if anything, Belgrade's anti-Bulgarian position on the Macedonian question drew the two countries closer to each other. Antonios Spiliotopoulos, the author of the first Greek history of Serbia (1912), noted that "there is nothing that divides the two nations" and that their accord "has never, until today, been seriously harmed by the medieval raids of Stefan Dušan against Byzantium or any other historical misdeed."¹³⁹ Consequently, Greek and Serbian historiographies never experienced a major confrontation on the battlefield of the medieval past comparable to the Greek-

137 Ibid., 142–143. On this connection see also above.

138 Livanios, "Christians, Heroes and Barbarians," 76–78.

139 Ibid., 79. See also Basil C. Gounaris, "Constructing and Deconstructing a Common Balkan Past in Nineteenth-Century Greece," in *Developing Cultural Identity in the Balkans: Convergence vs. Divergence*, eds. Raymond Detrez and Pieter Plat (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2005), 205.

Bulgarian one, even though Dušan posed no less of a threat to the “Greek empire” and showed no less ambition to hold its reins than the Bulgarian tsars did. This strange difference indicates once more the politically charged approach to Byzantine history and the considerable weight of particular political expedencies.

The central theme of Romantic Serbian historiography, closely analogous to the Bulgarian historiography of that time, was the rise, expansion and glorious feats of the Serbian state under the Nemanjić dynasty (1159–1367), culminating in the “Greco-Serbian” empire of Stefan Dušan (1346–1355). In this story Byzantium was assigned the role of the chief yet declining adversary, with a prestigious and alluring but aging culture which, in stark contrast with the youthful vitality and creativity of the Serbs, lacked the verve, energy and vision to carry its civilizational mission any further. The personification of this strain of history-writing was Pantelija Srećković (1834–1903), whose two-volume *History of the Serbian People* (1884, 1888) provides an archetype of the genre.

Added to the internal reasons for the failure of the Serbian local dynasts (*župani*) to create a “unified state” was, according to Srećković, the Byzantine Empire’s policy of promoting “state multiplicity” under the *župans* and “help[ing] all the contenders and opponents to national unification.” This political fragmentation continued until the mid-twelfth century and the rise of the Nemanjić dynasty that “united Serbia”—a trope literally replicating that of “united Bulgaria” under Simeon and Ioan Assen II.¹⁴⁰ Srećković interprets the subjugation of the Adriatic bishoprics by Stefan Nemanjić in 1177 as “a victory of the independent national development, a triumph among the Serbian tribes of the Slavonic faith and script, and a victory of the national consciousness over the influence of both Rome and Constantinople.” The newly established Serbian state and church made all Serbian tribes realize that “they were members of a single organism, a single nation.” Thus 1177 marked the Serbs’ freedom from the spiritual power of Rome, and this was followed, forty-five years later, by freedom from the dependency of the Constantinople Patriarchate with the founding of the Serbian archbishopric.¹⁴¹

Srećković describes late-twelfth-century Byzantium as a decaying state where brutal and bloody dynastic rivalries, stupidity and horrors reigned. This not only played into the hands of Stefan Nemanja, who succeeded to expand the Serbian state to the south and east, but warranted the characterization of his wars as “liberating many Serbs from the Greek yoke.” Furthermore, Srećković continually painted Byzantium as a place of growing political and

140 Pantelija Srećković, *Istorija srpskoga naroda*, vol. 2 (Belgrade: Kraljevsko-srpska državna štamparija, 1888), 4–8.

141 Ibid., vol. 2, 31.

moral decay, civil anarchy and economic weakness—the very opposite of the vibrant, irresistible and auspicious Serbian state.¹⁴² From day one, Serbian history, in Srećković's telling, led inevitably to Dušan's empire.

Dušan had been captivated by the idea “to found in the place of the Byzantine Empire a new Serbian empire”—an idea that, after Serbian military victories, “developed naturally in the mass of Slavic people.”¹⁴³ Similar to the Bulgarian case, “[Dušan's] military power and state greatness evolved at the expense of the Byzantine Empire,” hence his idea “to destroy it.” Dušan, Srećković tells us, had more right than anyone else to sit on the throne of “Orthodox Byzantium,” because he had fought against both the Latins and the Muslims and “was the protector and patron of Orthodoxy in the East.” Byzantium had little power and vigor left, but it

lured him as the center of the Orthodox learning and culture, with its forms of imperial power and with that gleam and importance that the Byzantine emperors had had since its founder Constantine the Great [...] Dušan's newly created empire sought to become a second or popular Slavic Byzantine Empire similar to the empire of Constantine the Great, with Orthodox ideals and aspirations whose representative until then was the Byzantine Empire.

In his pursuit “to become the chief of the Serbs and the Greeks,” Dušan saw himself as a “defender of the Orthodox Greek-Slavic world, countering the aspirations of the Western world.” This, according to Srećković, reflected Dušan's “independent political action.”¹⁴⁴

Srećković evidently wavered between seeing Dušan as an alternative to the Byzantine emperor and a contender for the Byzantine throne—in other words, between the idea of a vibrant Serbian empire to be erected on the ruins of a decaying Byzantium and the aspiration for Serbian participation in the running of the Eastern Roman Empire and adoption of its imperial dignity. Either way, there was no doubt for him that by pursuing the Byzantine throne, Dušan was performing a nationally elevating, “patriotic” mission; those who supported him demonstrated “national patriotism,” while his

142 Ibid., vol. 2, 36–42. Srećković argued, for example, that the state created by Nemanja exerted “such a powerful influence on the population of the Balkan peninsula that in 1186, counting on his state, the two Vlachs, Petar and Assen, staged a revolt,” which led to the creation of a “new Bulgarian state” (ibid., vol. 2, 44).

143 Ibid., vol. 2, 344, 360–361.

144 Ibid., vol. 2, 674–675, 483–484.

imperial title and the independent Serbian Church evoked “the pride and joy of all contemporary [Serbian] patriots and the people.” In this totally nationalized medieval context, it is not surprising that Srećković called the Orthodox creed the “Serbian faith” and credited the Serbian clergy for having “defended the interests of the land and the empire” and cultivated Serbian consciousness among the people.¹⁴⁵ The implications of this nationalization of religion, as in the other Balkan states, were crucial in the negotiation of the incipient modern Serbian identity. As another contemporary historian, the author of a book evocatively entitled *The Nemanjić and the Obrenović Dynasties or a Comparison of Two Bright Periods in Our History*, put it, “since [the founding of the independent Serbian church by Stefan Nemanja’s son, Sava] the faith of the Serbs became the popular faith, and faith and nationality merged in the same term.”¹⁴⁶

While acknowledging the great prestige and the magnetism of Byzantine state tradition and culture, Srećković, much like his Bulgarian counterparts, bemoaned their disruptive effect on the traditional social order in Serbian society, which was purportedly based on “organic” solidarity and social harmony. The Byzantinization of Serbian state life, especially after the proclamation of the empire, was the result above all of the vanity, snobbery and selfishness of the Serbian nobility. After accumulating huge wealth during the wars and being “wafted by the breath of Byzantinism,” they began to lead an opulent and sumptuous life. The egotism and lust for power that they had copied from the Greek aristocracy “prevailed over patriotism,” while Dušan’s autocratic rule, “modeled after the Byzantine,” destroyed the last remnants of local self-government.¹⁴⁷

Srećković’s attitude to Byzantinism is basically identical with that of the contemporary Bulgarian historians. He writes that from the moment “when Serbia began to act as the Byzantine Empire, the customary Serbian national life lost its meaning, life in accordance with the Greek ceremonies had begun to the detriment of the Serbian national life.” Since the Serbian nobles became “defenders of the Byzantine way of life” and began to imitate “the rotten bureaucratic Byzantine aristocracy,”

the people had turned its head on them and demanded to recover and rebuilt its previous *županian* life [...] In general we can say that as long

¹⁴⁵ Srećković, vol. 2, 61, 669, 675, 677, 881.

¹⁴⁶ Đ. Vrabac, *Nemanjići i Obrenovići ili upoređenje dva svetla perioda iz naše prošlosti* (Kragujevac: Štamparija Radivoja Jovanovića, 1900), 10. The Obrenović dynasty was one of the two reigning dynasties in nineteenth-century Serbia.

¹⁴⁷ Srećković, vol. 2, 811–816, 952.

as our kings were living the life of the people, their state was growing and advancing. With the adoption of foreign customs there began an anti-national life [that] ended with the collapse of the [Serbian] empire.

The main flaw of Dušan's empire, therefore, appears to have been its failure to "nationalize" the conquered "Greek" realm, and this fault led to its disintegration. However, the state idea that created it lived on and "prepared [the Serbs] for fighting for their survival and *the restoration of their empire*."¹⁴⁸ Srećković did not venture to surmise what would have happened with the Serbian state idea and popular traditions had Dušan ascended the Byzantine throne. However, he did project that, in such a case, by his own era there would have been not four different Slavic states but only one, which would have dominated the whole peninsula.¹⁴⁹

In the end, what modern Serbia inherited from the Middle Ages was not just the medieval Serbian empire but the "Serbian-Greek" (or "Serbian Byzantine") empire—one that had conquered most of the territory and appropriated the imperial dignity of Byzantium but which had exceeded it in political vigor, creativity and social arrangement. The homology between historical discourse and contemporary politics, or more precisely, the use of the past to advance political projects in the present, is readily demonstrated in this case. The first formal political program of the modern Serbian state, which drew the map of its future expansion in the Balkans (*Načertanije*, 1844), reads:

The Serbian state, which had started off well, must strive to expand and become stronger; its roots and foundations are firmly embedded in the Serbian Empire of the thirteenth and fourteenth century and in the rich and glorious Serbian history. Our history testified that the Serbian emperors had plundered the Greek [Byzantine] imperial heritage. . . . Furthermore, they almost demolished the fallen Byzantium in order to rejuvenate the Eastern Roman Empire and to lay the foundations of a new, Serbian-Slavic empire. This venture, however, was disrupted by the Turkish invasion . . . It is only now that the foundations of the Serbian empire are about to rise from the rubble of its historical base.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 689, 799, 816–817 (italics added).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 801.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Aleksandar Ignjatović, "Byzantium Evolutionized: Architectural History and National Identity in Turn-of-the-Century Serbia," in *Regimes of Historicity in Southeastern and Northern Europe: Discourses of Identity and Temporality, 1890–1945*, eds. Diana Mishkova, Balázs Trencsényi and Marja Jalava (London: Palgrave-Macmillan,

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The Transylvanian school set the tone for the anti-Byzantine current that would dominate, for the better part of the nineteenth century, Romanian historiography and culture “on behalf of the national idea and Latin solidarity.”¹⁵¹

Similarly to the Bulgarian case, the “Greeks” became an issue in the Romanian context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—when a Romanian national consciousness was crystallizing—by virtue of the significant Greek (Phanariot) cultural and political influence. Although they were part of the Ottoman Empire, until 1716 the two Danubian Principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia, were ruled by native princes. Thereafter the Sublime Porte handed over the governing of the principalities to the Greek-speaking and culturally post-Byzantine “administrative nobility” of the Phanariots. For almost a century the Greek language and Phanariot political culture were dominant in the Principalities; this era was also associated with political instability and economic decline. On the other hand, it was largely through (some) Phanariots that the subversive ideas of the Enlightenment reached, and spread throughout, the Principalities. As in Bulgaria, all this deeply embroiled the construction of Romanian national identity (and history) with an assessment of the role of the “Greeks”—a process whereby the prevailing cultural-political orientation of the present gave shape to the interpretation of the past.

The main orientation of the nineteenth-century Romanian cultural and political elite was towards the West. The theory of the Romanians’ Latin purity, avidly promoted by the Transylvanian school, was perfectly consistent with it. As Lucian Boia put it, “Through the Romans, the Romanians could present themselves to the West as the equals of anybody, and the phenomenon of acculturation no longer meant borrowing, but rather a return to the source, to a ground of civilization shared with the civilization of the West.”¹⁵² This orientation and the corresponding “Westernization” of Romanian history implied, according to the then-hegemonic civilizational coordinates, a distancing from the “lethargic” East and its cultural symbols. “The break with the East took the

2014), 260. It should be noted that Srećković considered the Slavs, who were subdued and later assimilated by the ruling Bulgarian chieftains, to have been Serbs (Srećković II, 801). Đ. Vrabac (quoted above) wrote that had Dušan’s empire survived a few more years, the modern Serbs would not have been at the mercy of “the callous powers which unfairly deprived [the Serbs] of purely Serbian lands” such as the areas around Trăn, Vidin and Sofia (in today’s Western Bulgaria) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Vrabac, 13).

151 Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii*, 213.

152 Boia, *History and Myth*, 87.

form of a massive devaluing and inculcation of peoples and cultures which had hitherto offered the Romans more models than motives of lamentation. The first victims were the Greeks. . . .”¹⁵³ Thus the nationalist drive for emancipation from Greek cultural dominance and regeneration of society through repudiation of the Ottoman-Phanariot past, as well as the drive towards modernization and “Europeanization,” pointed in the direction already charted by the Latinist school: refutation of the post-Byzantine and, by extension, the Byzantine world. For the Romanian Romantic historians, as for the Bulgarian ones, the Ottomans were the heirs of the Empire of the East. Hence their anti-Ottoman ideology largely predetermined their attitude to Byzantium and its survivals.

Most of the Romanian historians of the 1848 generation and the one that followed it simply ignored the topic: Byzantium and its relations with the Romanians were not of interest to those who dominated the humanities and culture in the Principalities until at least the 1880s. Nicolae Bălcescu’s (1819–1852) main work, *The Romanians under Prince Michael the Brave* (1849), sought to underpin with historical arguments the union of Wallachia and Moldavia and their right to independence.¹⁵⁴ Mihail Kogălniceanu’s (1817–1891) magisterial *History of Wallachia, of Moldavia and of the Transdanubian Vlachs* (1837) and Bogdan Hasdeu’s (1838–1907) *Critical History of the Romanians* (1873 and 1875) dealt with the fundamental problems for Romanian historiography at the time, like origins, continuity, ethno-historical space and the strength of the Romanians in the Middle Ages (after the fourteenth century), mentioning only in passing the Romanians’ contacts with Byzantium.¹⁵⁵ All of them and most of their fellow historians were extremely critical of the post-Byzantine Greek influence, both sociopolitical and cultural. Their virulent and even obsessive

¹⁵³ Ibid., 158.

¹⁵⁴ Nicolae Bălcescu did not comment on Byzantium (even if he occasionally mentioned the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms) and, perhaps tellingly, called Basil I “Emperor of the Orient.” Starting his narrative from the thirteenth century, the time when the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia emerged as political subjects, he focused his attention on the relations with the Magyars, the Ottomans and the Poles, not the Byzantines, and did not relate the trajectory of the Romanian nation in any way with that of Byzantium. Even in his essay “Romîni și fanarioții” he made no reference to the Byzantine tradition with which many Phanariots identified. See Nicolae Bălcescu, *Opere I. Scrieri istorice, politice și economice, 1844–1847*, ed. G. Zane (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol I,” 1940), 118–123.

¹⁵⁵ Concerning his grand linguistic projects, Hasdeu related the titles of the Romanian princes to those in Byzantium but complained that one could get an only a “faint idea” from the Byzantine authors about the relation of the Romanians north of the Danube with those to the south.

anti-Greek attitude focused primarily on the “Phanariot eighteenth century,” typically portrayed as the darkest period in Romanian history, but was often extended to “Grecism” in general. At the same time, only rarely would these anti-Phanariot and anti-Greek feelings be explicitly associated with Byzantium or the Byzantine-Romanian relations. Those who did it barely went beyond reiterating the clichés bequeathed by the Western Enlightenment, like Mihail Anagnosti, who lamented the transfer to the Phanariot courts of the “ill-famed debris of the old Byzantine court, including the intrigues of servants and the perfidious criminal politics,” or Gheorghe Săulescu, who explained the degeneration of the Eastern Romans by their contact with the harmful ideas of the “Greeks.”¹⁵⁶ More often than not, historians explained the rapacious behavior and detrimental impact of the Phanariots by citing their position as Ottoman functionaries rather than referring to the Byzantine legacy (even if their psychological portraits were often cast in the stereotypical aura of the Byzantines, as in the historical plays of Vasile Alecsandri or the journalistic articles of Bogdan Hasdeu).

It is telling that the exception came from (Habsburg) Transylvania—the historian and journalist George Bariț (1812–1893) made Byzantium an integral part of his anti-Phanariot discourse. In an article published in 1871, fifty years after the end of the Phanariot regime, Bariț argued that the Byzantine nobles, who had saved their lives from the Turkish yataghan by immigrating to the Principalities, were none other but the forefathers of the Phanariots. He thus connected the “character” and the fate of the Ottoman-Greek administrators with that of the one-time Byzantine aristocracy, secular and ecclesiastical. This superimposed Byzantine stratum, Bariț asserted with frequent references to Gibbon, was “bastard, broken, corrupt,” and its “nefarious” and “shameful” deeds were innumerable. The political conceptions of the princes from Phanar were also of Byzantine origin: for them the Principalities were only a means towards restoration of the Byzantine Empire and expulsion of the Turks “as far as the Euphrates.” Like the Magyars with respect to Transylvania, moreover, the Phanariots considered the Principalities to be provinces of the Byzantine Empire conquered hundreds of years before the Turks.¹⁵⁷

Bariț’s liberal-romantic outlook and the political grievances of the Transylvanian Romanians within Dualist Hungary may help us understand

156 Michel Anagnosti, *La Valachie et la Moldavie* (Paris: Imprimerie de R. Fournier, 1837), 18; quoted in Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 136, 139.

157 George Bariț, “Momente din istoria fanarioților,” in *Transylvania* 4, no. 6 (March 15, 1871), 61–64; *Transylvania* 4, no. 7 (April 1, 1871), 73–76; *Transylvania* 4, no. 8 (April 15, 1871), 89–92. See Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 165–169.

the national-didactic pursuits of such genealogical and comparative constructions. They drew on both Western Enlightenment thought and the tradition of the Latinist school of contrasting Romans and Greeks to stress the Romanians' ethnic vigor and imperial legacy. It was these characteristics that made the Transylvanian anti-Greek and anti-Byzantine discourse much more similar to the Bulgarian discourse than to that in the Romanian Principalities.

In the Principalities, preoccupations with Byzantium and post-Byzantinism remained marginal. Interestingly, they were also marginal for the few Greek scholars, like the historian G.G. Papadopol, who bothered to delve into Greek-Romanian relations in historical perspective—a fact that underscores the inconspicuousness of both these relations prior to 1453 and the Byzantine “origins” of the Phanariot issue. The growing preoccupation with “Balkan Romanity,” however—an issue that was hardly new but was becoming increasingly topical and politicized with the exacerbation of the “Macedonian question” in the last quarter of the nineteenth century—was bringing the Romanian historical narrative closer to Byzantium. Following in the footsteps of their Transylvanian predecessors, leading authorities like Bogdan Hasdeu (*Critical History of the Romanians*), Alexandru Xenopol (*History of the Romanians in Dacia Traiana*) and Constantin Erbiceanu “revealed” the great number of Vlachs inhabiting the lands south of the Danube and their even greater role in opposing the Byzantines and founding the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. In doing so they made use of Byzantine sources only to “verify” the unbroken continuity of Eastern Romanity south and north of the Danube.

Byzantium in the “Critical” Post-Romantic Historiography

The mid-nineteenth century marks the beginning of a shift in the general (European) interest in and perception of Byzantium. The Eastern Empire was being gradually re-discovered not only as the heir to, a savior of and a transmitter of the literary and cultural classical tradition of ancient Greece, but also as representing a unique historical development.

This shift involved the institutionalization in the second half of the nineteenth century of “Byzantine studies” as a separate field, comprising a number of sub-fields—history, philology and literature, art history, architecture, law, etc.—first in Germany and France, and then in Russia and England. The most significant step in this direction was made by Karl Krumbacher (1856–1909), who in the 1890s founded an Institute of Byzantine Studies and the specialized *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* in Munich. The progress in the study of Byzantine civilization and the growing recognition of its influence on world culture boosted

the development of Byzantine history and literature in particular. Krumbacher in Germany wrote a general outline of Byzantine literature, Charles Diehl in France wrote the first outline of Byzantine history up to the fall of the empire, and John Bagnell Bury in Great Britain wrote basic works on the Byzantine administrative system. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Byzantology was an established independent field within the historical discipline.¹⁵⁸

The growing appreciation of Byzantine culture, however, was coupled with lingering post-Enlightenment views of Byzantine politics and society as essentially the opposite of Western dynamism and potential for development. This view of Byzantium as fundamentally different from the West was buttressed by some Russian interpretations (by the Slavophiles and, from a different position, by Leontiev).

Between the 1870s and 1917, Byzantine studies also thrived in Russia. According to Russian-born British medievalist Dimitri Obolenski, their high scholarly quality was “probably unrivaled by any other branch of historical studies in Russia.”¹⁵⁹ As we have seen, Russian Byzantine studies grew out of the preoccupation with national history and Slavic studies. The exacerbation of the Eastern Question after the Crimean War added to the political motivations of the scholarly interest in this area. Vasiliy G. Vasiljevskiy (1838–1899) played a major role in the creation of Russian Byzantine studies and in the professional occupation with Byzantine history. In 1894 he founded the annual periodical *Vizantiyskiy Vremennik*, which had become a recognized organizational publication of international Byzantine studies along with *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*. Both he and his younger but prominent contemporary Fyodor Uspensky (Fyodor Uspenskiy, 1845–1928) focused their studies on the social history of the Byzantine Empire. Uspensky was the first to uphold vigorously the view that the Slavs’ occupation of the Balkan Peninsula profoundly altered the social and economic structure of the Empire’s European provinces in the seventh and eighth centuries, a view also espoused by Vasiljevskiy. But even high-profile scholars like him did not shy away from linking “science” with “politics,” thus epitomizing the fusion between academic and political reasoning on the field of critical historiography:

158 See Charles Diehl, “Les études byzantines en France au XIX^e siècle,” in Charles Diehl, *Etudes byzantines* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1905), 21–37; “Les études d’histoire byzantine en 1905,” *ibid.*, 38–106.

159 Dimitri Obolenski, “Modern Russian Attitudes to Byzantium,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 69.

We should be greatly mistaken were we to insist that it is within our power to avoid taking an active part in the settlement of matters connected with the Byzantine heritage. Although it usually depends upon the heir to accept or refuse the heritage left to him, still Russia's part in the Eastern question was bequeathed to her by history and cannot be changed voluntarily unless some unforeseen shock will give us the faculty to forget and stamp out the memory of the things which made us live, strive, and suffer.¹⁶⁰

Historical investigation predominated in the Russian school of Byzantinists from the beginning, and both before and after 1917, they focused on social, administrative and economic history and Russo-Byzantine relations.¹⁶¹ Alexander A. Vasiliyev (1867–1953) is another prominent figure in this field whose influential work straddles the period before and after World War II as well as the Russian and Western schools of Byzantinology.

By the early twentieth century, the methodological conventions of professional historiography were well established in all four Balkan countries under examination here. This, however, did not necessarily entail a radical shift in historiographical discourse, where method was only one, and usually not the decisive, element.¹⁶² There was a visible shift away from the frantic national mythology of the Romantic Age, and direct knowledge of the sources and specialized research figured high on the list of professional credentials. Even so, history remained closely tied to politics—in fact, many historians believed this link was indispensable and beneficial. As Nicolae Iorga memorably put it in his inaugural speech to the Romanian Academy in 1911, “The historian is an old man with the experience of his nation”; his duty is to be “a tireless recaller of national tradition, a witness to the unity of the folk over and above political and class barriers, a preacher of racial solidarity and discoverer of ideas towards which he himself should advance, giving an example to the youth who come after us.”¹⁶³ The positivist, scientific standards of research and “truth” itself, from this point of view, came to buttress the fulfillment of the historian’s

160 Fyodor I. Uspensky, *Istoriya Vizantiiskoy Imperii* (St. Petersburg, 1914), vol. 1, xii; quoted in A.A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire: From Constantine the Great to the Epoch of the Crusades*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1928), 48.

161 After more than a decade of stagnation between 1928, when F. Uspensky died, and 1944, Byzantine studies regained their prominence.

162 Boia, *History and Myth*, 63–70.

163 Quoted in *ibid.*, 64.

moral duty to his nation, with all the decisive judgments of the past this duty entailed.

The introduction of the critical method in the national historiographies coincided with the emergence of the first cohort of professional Balkan medievalists and Byzantinists in all four countries. Departments or seminars for Byzantine studies were set up at Belgrade University (1906), Bucharest University (1907), Athens University (Chair of Byzantine Art and Archaeology, 1911), and 1921 (Sofia University, as part of a Chair in East European History). It is important to note, however, that the advances in this new field were confined to a framework set by the institutionalized Romantic historical discourse, that is, by the convergence of the historical canon with national Romanticism. In many ways the historians discussed below inherited the main tenets of Romantic historiography while bringing in some new themes and perspectives.

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In Greece, as elsewhere in the Balkans, the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century marked the heyday of irredentist nationalism. The Great Idea was now unambiguously associated with the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire in the form of a great Greek state by most of the Greek political class, buoyed by the arguments of the most prominent Greek scholars. The leading Greek medievalist (and member of the nationalist *Ethnike Etairia*, founded in 1894), Spyridon Lambros, stated in 1886 that “historical Greece also contains Epirus, Thrace, Macedonia and Asia Minor. Any place that has been inhabited by Greeks, any place that has received the influence of Greek civilization, is Greece.”¹⁶⁴ Nikolaos Politis, the founding father of Greek folklore studies, believed that “to reoccupy Constantinople and again turn Saint Sophia into an Orthodox church—this is the apex of the Great Idea.”¹⁶⁵ Consequently, the center of gravity in historical production moved from Hellenism to Byzantinism. Or, as the historian Dimitrios Vikelas put it in 1885, “the center of Hellenism has been displaced. It has moved from Athens to Constantinople”¹⁶⁶—“the dream and hope of all

164 Spyridon Lambros, *Istoria tes Hellados*, Athens, vol. 1, 1886, 1; quoted in Effi Gazi, *Scientific National History: The Greek Case in Comparative Perspective (1850–1920)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 119–120.

165 Nikolaos Politis, “Croyances populaires sur le rétablissement de la Nation Hellénique,” *La Revue de Grèce* 1 (1928), 153.

166 Demetrius Vikelas, *Le rôle et les aspirations de la Grèce dans la question d'Orient* (Paris: Cercle Saint-Simon, 1885), 24.

Greeks," as Ioannis Kolettis called "The City" back in 1844. For all these and many other intellectuals, scholarly vocation and scientific method were strongly interwoven with commitment to a political idea. Pavlos Karolidis (1849–1930), one of the most eminent historians and Orientalists at the time and successor of K. Paparrigopoulos at the chair of Greek history in the University of Athens, explained the direct political implications of scholarly Byzantinism when stating that before and after the revolution of 1821, the Great Idea "had as its guidelines for national and political unity Byzantine Hellenism and Byzantine traditions"; modern Hellenism looked upon Byzantium as its "religious and at the same time national centre."¹⁶⁷

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the continuous history of the Greeks, with the organic "middle bond" of Byzantium, had been definitively consolidated. Western European scholarship contributed to it: Karl Krumbacher's history of Byzantine literature was translated into Greek between 1897 and 1900, as were some of the major works of the French Byzantinist Gustav Schlumberger on Byzantine history. An increasing number of Greek scholars were looking for the origins of Greek institutions, customs, and mentality in the Byzantine past. But as A. Liakos observed, a lengthy period of time passed between the acceptance of Byzantium as a part of the national narrative and the actual interest of historians in Byzantium and their use of it in national symbolism and representation. Byzantium was not rehabilitated in school textbooks until the end of the nineteenth century; the Byzantine Museum was not established until 1914, and the Association for Byzantine Studies until 1918; the first professors of Byzantine art and Byzantine history were only appointed at the University of Athens in 1912 and 1924, respectively. It was only after World War I that the Greek Archaeological Society began to turn its attention to the Byzantine monuments. The first decrees classifying Byzantine churches and fortresses in Greece as archaeological monuments were issued in 1921, which led to the foundation, in 1935, of the Archive of the Byzantine Monuments in Greece.¹⁶⁸ Appropriation took place not only in stages but also in different fields. The theory of the unity of Greek history was transferred from the

167 Quoted in Augustinos, *Consciousness and History*, 27. Greece's imperial self-projection on a geopolitical level came to a head during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, when Greek official documentation and propaganda made explicit references to Byzantium. (See Anne Couderc, "Byzance à la Conférence de la Paix (1919). Vénizélos, les revendications de la Grèce et l'idée d'Empire," in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 383–401.

168 Vangelis Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis kai i didaskalia tis istorias sto Panepistimio Athinon (1837–1932)* (Athens: Istoriko Archeio Ellinikis Neolaias, Institutou Neoellinikon Ereunon, 2006), 320–324.

field of political history to the field of language (whose leading figure was Georgios Hatzidakis, the founder of Greek linguistics), and folklore (starting with Nikolaos Politis, the founder of Greek ethnography, or *laografia*). “In the case of Byzantium,” Liakos wrote recently, “this process took several decades to complete, and new images are still in play.”¹⁶⁹

The language question—a major intellectual debate in modern Greece between purists, advocating the more archaic form of Greek (*katharevousa*), and demoticists, arguing for the literary codification of the vernacular—involved not just language but two different interpretations of the past.¹⁷⁰ The former insisted on Hellenism as the key notion capturing the connection to the glorious classical past, while the latter espoused the notion of *Romiosyne*, emphasizing the central place of Byzantium in Greek history, which they considered to be the birthplace of the demotic language and popular culture. Or, as Ioannis Psycharis (1854–1929), the most influential figure in the demoticist movement, phrased it, “the language question comprises everything—country, religion, the whole national heritage. . . . Language and fatherland are one.”¹⁷¹

It is noteworthy that this long-standing controversy did not impinge on the official national historiography. Both sides promoted the idea of continuity and racial kinship with ancient and medieval (“Byzantine”) Greece and upheld the “Great Idea.” What was new in the latter half of the nineteenth century was that interest in the Byzantine period was buttressed by the discovery of folklore as a repository for ancient customs and beliefs surviving into modern times and the institutionalization of linguistics and ethnography as national sciences. In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Greece, popular culture and memory, rather than political history, legitimized the study of Byzantium.¹⁷² In 1891 the ethnographer Nikolaos Politis (1852–1921) insisted that Byzantium had contributed to both the transmission of Greek popular culture from ancient to modern times and the formation of a distinctive Greek *ethnie* via Christianity and the Hellenization of the Empire. The new discipline of *laographia* (folkloric studies) was intended to provide evidence of this by unearthing the “national epic” of the Byzantine period.¹⁷³ And although

169 Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 210.

170 For a concise account of this issue in linguistic terms, see Robert Browning, *Medieval and Modern Greek* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 103–118.

171 Quoted in Gerasimos Augustinos, *Consciousness and History: Nationalist Critics of Greek Society, 1897–1914* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1977), 33.

172 Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 72. “Demoticism was basically aiming at the transformation of the discourse of national identity through literature and linguistic change and not exclusively through historical writing. . . . In their discussions, they preferred sociology to history” (Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 214).

173 Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 48–49; Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 108–110.

the *katharevoussa* remained in official usage for decades to come, in about 1880 the demoticists' conception of the past won the day and held sway for the following fifty years. The established tripartite structure of Greek history demanded equivalent treatment of all its periods, but the ecumenical ideal ultimately devoured the narrow "classicist" concept of Hellenism.¹⁷⁴

The emphasis on cultural history, already noticeable in Paparrigopoulos's intention to downplay Fallmerayer's assertions about the racial makeup of the Greeks, was accentuated by the historical appropriation of the periods after the disintegration of the Byzantine Empire in 1204—the Frankish occupation (1204–1261), the Venetian occupation (which in certain areas lasted until 1797) and the period of Ottoman rule. Greek historiography, without the central backbone of political history, used cultural history as a substitute. Byzantine scholars' contribution to the Italian humanism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was extended to the myth that the Greeks were the cause of the revival of civilization in modern Europe. This powerful myth largely influenced the formation of the Greek national myth, the Great Idea.¹⁷⁵ "Greece is destined to enlighten the West with its decline and the East with its resurrection. The former task was fulfilled by our ancestors; the latter falls to us," Prime Minister Ioannis Kolettis stated in 1844.¹⁷⁶

Among the historians of the time, Dimitrios Vikelas (1835–1908) perhaps best epitomizes this integrative cultural perspective on Greek history. In Vikelas Byzantine Hellenism found one of its most passionate purveyors, not only in Greece but also abroad.¹⁷⁷ He made plain his admiration for Paparrigopoulos's monumental edifice and committed himself to boosting the edifying aspects of Byzantine "Helleno-Christian" civilization, whose existence, he argued, "guaranteed the preservation of the most precious interests of real civilization." Vikelas attributed a specific mission to Byzantium in that it had preserved civilization at a time of barbarian onslaught on "the rest of the world" and bequeathed it to the European Renaissance. The empire's main task "was not to create but to save; and that mission she fulfilled for the benefit

174 Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques*, 385–386. See also Roderick Beaton, "Romanticism in Greece," in *Romanticism in National Context*, eds. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 96–99.

175 Liakos, "Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece," 212.

176 Quoted in Konstantinos Th. Dimaras, *Ellinikos Romantismos* (Athens: Hermes, 1982), 406.

177 Some of Vikelas's major works were translated into French, German and English (see, e.g., his *Seven Essays on Christian Greece* [London: Alexander Gardner, 1890] and *La Grèce byzantine et moderne. Essais historiques* [Paris: Librairies de Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1893]). He also published regularly in widely read scholarly journals like *La Nouvelle Revue*, *Scottish Review* and *Revue des deux mondes*. Vikelas collaborated closely with Karl Krumbacher.

of the Europe of the future." It was hardly the decaying organism described by Montesquieu and Gibbon; its endurance demonstrated organizational power and vitality. The modern world owed it lasting gratitude, first, for continuing and handing down to posterity "the civilization of the ancients, modified by the Christian Religion" and second, for saving Christian Europe from "a slavery where the religion of the Koran would have been propagated by the sword." Thanks to Byzantium, "a martyr in the cause of the human race," and its centuries-long battle against the Muslims, Western Europe had the time to develop its strength.¹⁷⁸ Sadly, however, "the fall of Constantinople [under the Ottomans] was in great part the work of that very Europe which owed and owes her so much." For Vikelas "the most deplorable epoch in the history of the Byzantine Empire . . . was that in which it was exposed to the influence of the Crusaders, and thus brought into contact with Western Europe." He is ultimately grateful for the failure of the Western Crusaders to take permanent possession of Constantinople. Otherwise, he says, "the consequences might have been even more fatal to the free development of the purely Hellenic genius than has been the Ottoman sword": the Greeks "would have lost the traditions and memories of their own ancient glories" and their faith and would have become a "hybrid mixture of Eastern and Western races."¹⁷⁹

Significantly, Vikelas declared that his fellow countrymen had given Fallmerayer's theory a great deal more attention than it deserved and invested too much patriotic zeal in refuting "the whimsical fancy in question, and denounce[ing] its author, upon every possible occasion." Even supposing, for the sake of argument, that Fallmerayer was right in asserting that Hellas was flooded by Slav immigration, Vikelas maintained, it would have been no disgrace to the Hellenes to receive an infusion of foreign blood. On the contrary, such mixtures provided many great nations in modern history with the union of qualities that had raised them so high. Moreover, regardless of whether the Slavs spread across Greece or not, they had since been completely absorbed. "The entirely and exclusively Hellenic character of all the features, physical and intellectual, presented by the present inhabitants of the country, is a most striking fact, almost unique in history, a glorious mark of our race, and a wondrous proof of the intensity of our national vitality." Far from violating historical continuity, therefore, the fact that even the Byzantine emperors lacked racial ties to Pericles or Philopoimen underscored the power "of the solidarity which Byzantinism had effected with Hellenism," for it was the transmission not of the pure Hellenic stock but of "the spirit of Hellenism" that

178 Demetrios Bikelas, *Seven Essays*, 3–4, 27–34.

179 *Ibid.*, 12, 18–19, 34, 39–40.

really mattered.¹⁸⁰ Judging from the continued hysterical reactions on behalf of Greek racial continuity and against Fallmerayer's thesis, this argument seems not to have gained much traction at the time. But it definitely spelled out the actual problem the Bulgarian argument faced when trying to exploit the thesis to its own ends—namely, the historical reality of the Slavs' complete assimilation in the territories later constituting the Kingdom of Greece, a reality that reverberated painfully with the cultural assimilation of many well-off Bulgarians in the Greek *ethnie* in more recent times.

The philosopher Petros Vrailas-Armenis (1812–1884) took the Hellenization of Christianity one step further by positing Orthodoxy as a national prototype. If Byzantine art was necessarily religious, Vrailas-Armenis wrote in a forcefully Hegelian line of argument, it was because religion represented the highest expression of truth. In his essay *On the Historical Mission of Hellenism* (1871), he contended that, in 1453, “the Byzantine state was destroyed and the nation was enslaved, but Hellenism did not die; it was transmitted to the West and in the end it rose up by itself.”¹⁸¹

Spyridon Lambros—a Byzantinist and the leading representative of the “scientific study” of Greek history—did not challenge the hegemonic master narrative as contrived by Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos (whose disciple he was). But drawing on the theoretical and methodological principles of German historicism and the French positivist school, he transformed the Romantic historical discourse into a coherent taxonomic system.¹⁸² Lambros sought to display, through meticulous and “critical” use of sources, the organic link between the different periods of Greek history, among which Byzantium loomed large: “Christian Greece, which, under the banner of the cross, fought for freedom is more important than ancient Greece. The Roman domination, the Byzantine kingdom and Christianity unified the differences and assuaged the passions.”¹⁸³

Sharing Paparrigopoulos's assumption that “the desire for national unity... has its roots in our medieval history,” Lambros saw the Byzantine era as crucial for the self-definition of the Greeks, the locus of their national

180 Ibid., 22–23, 61.

181 Quoted in Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 57; see also 51–52.

182 During his studies in the 1870s at the University of Berlin and the University of Leipzig, Lambros attended the seminars of the leading representatives of German historicism (Th. Mommsen, J.G. Droysen, H. von Treitschke, etc.), and their influence on his work is evident. He also translated, in 1902, the basic “manual” of French positivism, Ch. Langlois and Ch. Seignobos's *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1898).

183 Spyridon Lambros, *Logoi kai Arthra 1878–1902* (Athens: P.D. Sakellarios, 1902), quoted in Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 64.

identity. He was therefore frustrated by the Byzantines' own deficit of historical consciousness, stating, "analysing the Byzantines' national feelings (*sic*) in their historiography and the rest of their literature, we come across major inconsistencies. Although as linguists, orators, and scholars they were *perfect Greeks*, as far as their historical consciousness is concerned they were simply Christians and members of the Roman *civitas*."¹⁸⁴ Though they described themselves as Roman and Christian, the Byzantines' *actual* cultural identity was Greek. Lambros devoted himself to proving this "fact," while at the same time seeking to put his work, and Byzantine studies generally, on a solid "scientific" basis in terms of collecting and analyzing primary sources—"a scientific work," he wrote, "that I am glad to describe as a purely Greek one."¹⁸⁵

A major focus of Lambros's research was the history of the Peloponnese—the core province of the new nation-state and the "case study" of Fallmerayer's theory. However, Lambros's interest was spurred by ambitions greater than a mere rebuttal of Fallmerayer. He aimed to demonstrate that, following the capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204, the Peloponnese became the center of activity of the last Byzantine dynasty, the Paleologues, thus making a case for the continuation of the Empire, along with Greek ethnic dominance, in the area. The core of the future nation-state was thus highlighted as the legitimate successor of Byzantium after its disintegration.¹⁸⁶ In this way Lambros set the frame for a key argument, widely shared by later generations of Greek (and foreign) historians, that the Greek "national idea" had emerged at the time of the Paleologue dynasty and was focused on the future national center of the Greeks.

Lambros saw his efforts at securing "scientific" status and quality for Greek "Byzantinism" as an important national task. It was also intended to establish a respectable place for Greek scholarship in "historical science abroad" which, as Paparrigopoulos had bitterly noted in 1879, "had not yet admitted the historical unity of the Greek nation."¹⁸⁷ Lambros made explicit this connection when stating, "Western scholars have undertaken the systematic illumination of a past which is the past of the Greek nation itself. For this reason, it is our obligation, for reasons not only scientific but also national, to construct this

184 Quoted in Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 93 (italics added).

185 Quoted in *ibid.*, 94 (italics added). Lambros spared no effort in collecting manuscripts and other sources, introduced a course on palaeography at the University of Athens and set up a specialized journal in Byzantine and post-Byzantine studies, *Neos Hellenomnemon*, which became one of the most influential Greek historical periodicals.

186 Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 97–98.

187 Konstantinos Paparrigopoulo (*sic*), *Les évolutions de l'histoire grecque à notre époque* (Athens: Messenger d'Athènes, 1879), 7.

building to which so far we have made only small contributions.”¹⁸⁸ This appeal and the Byzantinist school that Lambros left behind did not go unheeded inside or outside of Greece: his “prodigious activity” is closely associated with the inception of the professional Byzantine studies in Greece and was acclaimed for having “given substance to what had hitherto been isolated, groping, crumbled-into-dust research efforts.”¹⁸⁹

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Byzantine studies, which until then had focused mostly on history, linguistics and ethnography, began to infiltrate neighboring humanities such as philosophy, literature, art history, theological and political thought (as shown in the works of Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Konstantinos Sathas and Ioannis Sakellion). K. Sathas, a leading philologist, initiated a “Medieval Library” that presented various Byzantine authors to a broader public. The aforementioned D. Vikelas founded the Society for Dissemination of Useful Books in order to publicize the works of scholars delving in Byzantine topics.¹⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that the years between the Greek military debacle in 1897 and the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, experienced by the Greeks as a period of national humiliation, was a time when the “memory” of Byzantium spilled far beyond the world of scholarship into a much broader intellectual and performative field. Byzantine themes and admiration for what Constantin Cavafy called “our glorious Byzantinism” entered poetry (such as that by Kostis Palamas and Constantin Cavafy) and historical novels (like those by Alexandros Papadiamantis and Penelope Delta). In the traumatic post-1897 years, this broader interest in Byzantium was connected to the rise of a new kind of nationalism—neo-Romantic and anti-rationalist—that rejected the supremacy of classical Greece and the emulation of the West.¹⁹¹

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Marin Drinov (1838–1906) is considered the first representative (along with the Czech Konstantin Jireček) of the “critical-historical method,” who had

188 Quoted in Effi Gazi, “‘Europe’: Writing an Ambivalent Concept in 19th Century Greek Historical Culture,” in *Die Griechen und Europa* (Zur Kunde Südosteuropas 11/25), eds. Herald Heppner and Olga Katsiardi-Hering (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), 119–120.

189 Vitalien Laurent and Eugenio Dalleggio, “Les études byzantines en Grèce (1940–1948),” *Revue des études byzantines* 7 (1949), 91.

190 Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 50–51.

191 Augustinos, *Consciousness and History*. As the case of the essayist Perikles Giannopoulos indicates, however, the new nationalism did not necessarily look to Byzantium as a model but could be premised on cultural autarchy drawing on race and nature (*ibid.*, 66–83).

overcome the Romantic phase in Bulgarian historiography and imposed an “impartial and critical attitude toward the [historical] sources.”¹⁹² As in the Greek case, however, this “paradigm shift” did not lead to amending the key notions pervading Romantic history-writing. Drinov fully subscribed to both Fallmerayer’s “compelling evidence” confirmed by “the unbiased science” and the idea on the deleterious effects of Byzantinism on medieval Bulgaria. The main conduit of the latter was the high clergy, with its wasteful life and penchant for intrigues—a reflection of the era in which Drinov was writing (the 1860s saw the peak of the Greek-Bulgarian ecclesiastical conflict) rather than of his “unbiased method.”¹⁹³ He stuck to the dominant thesis about medieval Bulgaria’s relentless fight with Byzantium for the preservation of its political and cultural independence. Several Bulgarian tsars—Simeon, Samouil, Assen and Ioan Assen—tenaciously strove to capture the capital of the Empire, “which they wanted to turn into a Slavic capital.” The Bulgarians were the first among the Slavs to confront and begin absorbing Byzantine civilization. Unlike most of his predecessors, however, Drinov insisted that the medieval Bulgarians “assimilated but did not blindly obey” this civilization. In contrast to other “new-European nations” which, by adopting Christianity, surrendered their conscience to Rome or Byzantium, the Bulgarians “immediately endeavored to establish their own national Church as entirely independent from both Rome and Byzantium.” They also acquired a “national alphabet that, as far back as the tenth century, tried to catch up with Byzantine literature, the richest and, so to say, the most fashionable at that time.”¹⁹⁴

Detrimental Byzantinism was largely restricted to the clerics, whose economic and cultural oppression, Drinov argued, caused Bogomilism to emerge in Bulgaria.¹⁹⁵ In the following decades this thesis would incorporate Byzantinism in all its ramifications—not only ecclesiastic but also social, political and cultural—and, at the same time, present Bogomilism as the genuine (democratic, progressive, rational) national religion, the precursor of the Western European

192 Petăr Nikov, “Zadachata na dнешnata bălgarska istoriografiya,” *Godishnik na Sofiyskiya universitet*, Istoriko-filologicheski fakultet, vol. 17 (1920–1921), 300–301; Ivan Dujčev, “Les études byzantines chez les Slaves méridionaux et occidentaux depuis le XVII^e siècle,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 77.

193 Marin Drinov, *Trudove na M.S. Drinov po bălgarska i slavyanska istoriya* (Sofia: Dărzhavna pechatnitsa, 1909), 42–44.

194 Marin Drinov, *Săchineniya na M.S. Drinov*, vol. 3, ed. Vasil Zlatarski (Sofia: Dărzhavna pechatnitsa, 1915), 24–26.

195 The thesis that Bogomilism emerged as a Bulgarian reaction against the “Byzantine yoke” was set forth by the Russian Slavacist Yuriy Venelin in 1838 and was later taken up by Hristo Botev and Marin Drinov.

Reformation. This interpretation displays close parallels with the Greek one about iconoclasm in eighth-century Byzantium: Paparrigopoulos considered the iconoclasts to be progressive and rational, defying religious fanaticism, and promoting reforms and secular education; despite their defeat, their legacy lived on and strongly influenced the character of the Byzantine Empire. Dimitrios Vikelas, who sought to explain the overwhelming place of religion in Byzantine history, went one step further: for him iconoclasm was a reformist movement that not only exercised strong influence on the Byzantine society and history but was a point of departure for the Reformation in the West.¹⁹⁶ The Bulgarian and the Greek historical narratives thus also clashed on the issue of “parenthood” of the European ecclesiastical reform.

Vasil N. Zlatarski (1866–1935) was the most prominent Bulgarian medievalist and the personification of the “critical (scientific) school” in historiography at the beginning of the twentieth century. His contribution to the foundation of the Bulgarian historical canon, crowned by his three-volume *History of the Bulgarian State in the Middle Ages* (1918–1940), was comparable to that of Paparrigopoulos’s *History* to the Greek national narrative. Against the backdrop of Zlatarski’s systematic training (he was a student of the Russian Slavist V.I. Lamansky and the Byzantinist V.G. Vasiljevskiy) and critical method, it is astonishing to see how much he had inherited from the notions of the Romantic generation of historians and from the “national” construal of Byzantium, which had taken shape between Paisiy and Drinov.

In his introductory lecture to the Bulgarian history course at the University of Sofia in 1895, devoted to “The Main Periods in Bulgarian History,” Zlatarski prefigured some of the main theses—or, to be more precise, ideological positions—that would form the bedrock of his *History*. He drew attention to the “striking similarity” in the history of the First (861–1018) and the Second (1185–1396) Bulgarian Kingdoms, most notably the spectacular rise and tragic fall of both. He began the search for the underlying reasons for this “peculiar phenomenon” by noting the “global-historical importance” of the lands that the Bulgarians came to occupy—Thrace and Moesia, where “the centuries-old antagonism between Hellenism and Romanism, between East and West [had begun], an antagonism that continues until today.” The settlement of the Slavs in these lands was tolerated at first by Byzantium because the Empire aimed “to use them as a shield against new barbarian invasions and attacks . . . hoping that they would bow down before Byzantinism and would merge with the [other] peoples of the empire.” However, these hopes were not fulfilled—the Bulgarians managed “to create their own national foundations . . . [the]

196 Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 92; Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 53.

beginnings of an independent culture and to differentiate themselves politically.” Against this “nationally consolidating and politically robust” state, Byzantium’s military power was helpless, so it resorted to another weapon—Christianization. However, according to Zlatarski, the conversion to Christianity was “not the fruit of [Byzantium’s] missionary activity,” and still less a foreign import, but a conscious and carefully considered act aimed at accomplishing a threefold program of national consolidation: “political and cultural unification of the Balkan Slavs under the scepter of the Bulgarian master,” “strengthening of central power” against the nobility, and “jolting the ethnic dualism [between Bulgars and Slavs] in favor of the Slav element.”¹⁹⁷ The main result of the adoption of Christianity from Byzantium (rather than Rome) was the “establishment of a national church, through which the Bulgarian nationality was preserved” and the “opening of a wide road to our people for a unique (*samobitno*) cultural-educational development on a national basis.” Likewise, the Cyrillic (“Slavic”) alphabet—the other “milestone in the imminent struggles of the Bulgarians for spiritual freedom”—was created by Cyril and Methodius who acted not as Byzantine missionaries but as “Slav apostles” and who partook in the creation of a “new cultural-historical type, the Slavobulgarian, which became a model for all Slavic- and non-Slavic Eastern European countries that were under the cultural influence of the Eastern Church.”¹⁹⁸ Thus the robust medieval foundation of the Bulgarian “national spirit” that the contemporary Greek historians found wanting was forcefully asserted, and the universalistic cultural pretenses of the “Greeks” were dispelled.

In a salient agreement with the revolutionary Romantics of the previous period, Zlatarski considered the reign of Tsar Simeon—the time when the First Bulgarian Kingdom (681–1018) reached the peak of its territorial expansion and political strength—to be a betrayal of the “national spirit” and of the “political and social life of the Slavo-Bulgarians.” It concerned Simeon’s absolute autocracy and bureaucratization, “fully adopted in [their] Byzantine form,” the glittering pomp and the privileges of the boyar estate, “now dressed in the form of the Byzantine aristocracy with all its rights and prerogatives,” and the clergy who “adopted the Byzantine church hierarchy with all its privileges... and

197 Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoria na bălgarskata dărzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 1, part 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1971) (1st ed., 1927), 56–65. It is worth noting that to this day, these three domestic motives, plus the one about the international legitimization of the Bulgarian state, constitute the fundamental explanation for (and any schoolbook lesson about) the Bulgarians’ adoption of Christianity. See also Vasil Zlatarski, *Glavnite periodi v bălraskata istoria* (Sofia: n.p., 1895), 4–11.

198 Zlatarski, *Istoria na bălgarskata dărzhava*, vol. 1, part 2, 159–165.

vices.” All this, according to Zlatarski, caused deep social disruption and cultural estrangement that severed the political and spiritual elite from the people.¹⁹⁹ Since the Empire proved unable to defeat the Bulgarian state, it set out to conquer it from the inside by infiltrating the Bulgarian court and the government of the country. After Simeon’s death (927), this became “the main task of Byzantine policy towards Bulgaria and remained so until the final demise of the empire.” The marriage of Tsar Peter (927–969) to the granddaughter of the Byzantine emperor ushered in a period of intensive penetration of Byzantinism throughout the state machinery and a deepening of the split between the nation and its leaders. This rift led to the emergence and fast spread of the heretical teachings of Bogomilism—an expression of “the popular protests . . . against the moral decay and indiscriminate imitation of everything non-Bulgarian, which the alien Byzantine influence harmful to the state had brought in.” The decadence at the top and the subversion at the bottom ultimately caused the country to fall under Byzantine domination in the eleventh century, “when the full routine of the decaying empire came to reign.”²⁰⁰ Zlatarski’s reading of the significance of the long resistance of the “Western Bulgarian Kingdom” under Samuil to Byzantine military pressure is meaningful:

The main importance of Tsar Samuil in our history lies not only in the fact that he defended the independence of Bulgaria [for forty-five more years], but also in the fact that . . . he succeeded, through his many years of stubborn struggle with Basil II, to educate and raise his people in the spirit of freedom by opposing the destructive foreign influence, and to inspire in them a strong hatred for the cruel and ruthless conqueror of Bulgaria—Byzantium, and to everything Byzantine—a merit to which the preservation of the nationality of the Bulgarian people during the onerous Byzantine domination undoubtedly owes a great deal.²⁰¹

Zlatarski went on at length about the Bulgarians’ suffering and exploitation during the Byzantine domination of the former Bulgarian lands (1018–1185), especially with Byzantium’s relentless pursuit of what he called a “[policy of] Romeization,” that is, cultural Hellenization carried out, according to him, since the late eleventh century mainly by the Church of Constantinople. This Romeization, however, failed to strike deep roots, and “the Byzantine government and the Constantinople Church failed to achieve their ultimate goal—to

199 Ibid., 520–525.

200 Ibid., 532–537, 600–602; Vasil Zlatarski, *Glavnite periodi*, 13.

201 Zlatarski, *Istoria na bălgarskata dărzhava* vol. 1, part 2, 702–703.

denationalize the Bulgarian people through [their] cultural influence.”²⁰² The Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1185–1396), Zlatarski argued, displayed the same pattern as the first one: as long as Byzantium was weakened by the Crusades, Bulgaria grew in prosperity and strength; once the empire was re-established and its influence in the Bulgarian court resumed, the Bulgarians headed down the road to their destruction: “The Byzantines, by transferring to the Bulgarians their laws and literature, mores and vices, dragged their followers and disciples along with them in the common grave—under the Turkish yoke.”²⁰³

For Zlatarski, therefore, the political ascendancy, prosperity and cultural flourishing of the Bulgarian state were possible only during periods “free of Byzantine influence.” Conversely, Bulgaria’s decline and ultimate demise became inevitable once its doors were open to the rotting power of Byzantinism. All this is a remarkably faithful reiteration of the “pre-professional” and “unscientific” Romantic interpretation of Bulgarian medieval history, as is Zlatarski’s other main thesis: that the Byzantine influence infected only the court and the boyars, while “the people always stayed away from it; [the people] were always hostile to it and upheld their [national] ideal.”²⁰⁴ Bulgarian history thus ensued, according to Zlatarski, from the confrontation between “two diametrically opposite currents”: an “internal,” pushing towards ethnic differentiation, unification and development of national culture; and an “external,” with “the constant pressure of foreign influence” always aimed against and aspiring to destroy the first current. Combined with the special position of Bulgaria in the eternal antagonism between East and West, these two currents defined the permanent features of Bulgarian history, which were also observable in Bulgaria’s present.²⁰⁵

The interpretation of Bulgarian history and Byzantium’s role in it, which Zlatarski elaborated on with the techniques of professional historiography, remained remarkably stable all the way from the 1890s—which saw an upsurge of Byzantine studies in Europe and Russia—through the wartime years to the radically altered political and intellectual context after World War I. But it also reveals a deep ambivalence, almost a schism, between two largely incompatible images of the Bulgarian medieval past—the political and

202 “Romeization,” according to Zlatarski, was pursued mainly through the substitution of Church Slavonic with Greek and through the “persecution of Bulgarian books.” See Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoria na bălgarskata dărzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1972; 1st ed., 1934), 252–366; 399–409.

203 Zlatarski, *Glavnite periodi*, 12–14.

204 *Ibid.*, 14.

205 *Ibid.*, 14–15. See also Vasil Zlatarski, “Istoricheskoto znachenie na Bălgaria s ogleđ kăm neinoto mezhdudărzhavno položenie,” *Slavianska biblioteka* 1 (1920), 30–56.

cultural prominence of the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms and their imputed “anti-national,” “Byzantine” character. The Bulgarian case perhaps best exemplifies the inherent and insurmountable problems of building a national narrative out of imperial material. The proposed “compromise”—pitting the “national” popular masses and the “Byzantinized” elite against each other—only aggravated the problems. There was still a long way to go before the claims to the symbolic capital of Byzantium—seen not as Greek but as Slavo-Byzantine—would attempt to redeem the Bulgarian historical imagery from its Procrustean bed.

Meanwhile, gestures in this direction were not altogether missing. Significantly, however, they did not come from historians. In an extensive review of D. Vikelas’s *Historical Essays*, Ivan Shishmanov (1862–1928), a prominent Bulgarian literary scholar and ethnographer, outlined a perspective towards Byzantium and its impact consistent with that of the Greek author (and the budding Byzantine studies in Western Europe and Russia) but still unpopular with the Bulgarian historians. Shishmanov applauded that attitudes toward the Byzantine Empire had shifted from regarding it as “a political monster” and “cultural swamp” (an attitude that he, too, attributed to the “witty dialectics of Montesquieu and the subjective criticism of Gibbon”) to being informed by “a more sober look at the history of Byzantium and its importance to medieval culture.” “The most recent historical critique,” he wrote, “arrives at results that are not far from a complete rehabilitation of the state that, until recently, bore the contemptuous name ‘*Empire de la décadence*.’” This change of attitude was, according to him, “a good sign of a sound, unbiased critique [and] well-founded objectivity.” It was beginning to implant the idea that “Byzantium is far better than its reputation” and form “a broad recognition for the benefits that Byzantium undoubtedly offered to Europe in its darkest times.” As far as the Slavs were concerned, Shishmanov saw Byzantium as their “teacher and civilizer.” Interestingly, next to such forums of this new, “scientific” attitude like *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* and *Vizantiyskiy vremennik*, Shishmanov named as “the most sober Greek scientific historians” Paparrigopoulos, Sathas, Zambelios, Lambros, Skarlatos and Byzantios.²⁰⁶ Yordan Ivanov (1872–1947), a student of Shishmanov and an authority on Byzantine and Bulgarian medieval literature, used to stress the beneficial “strong and multidimensional impact of the Byzantine culture” and the “advanced Byzantine empire” on the historical life of the Bulgarians.²⁰⁷

206 Ivan D. Shishmanov, “[Review of] La Grèce byzantine et moderne. Essais historiques par D. Bikelas,” *Bălgarski pregled* 2 (1894–1895), 4–5, 210–212.

207 Yordan Ivanov, “Grătsko-bălgarski otnosheniya predi tsărkovnata borba” (1911), in Yordan Ivanov, *Izbrani proizvedenia*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1982). Significantly, on the

At the same time, in an essay discussing the “tragedy” of the Balkans having skipped that “great cultural-historical process,” the Renaissance, Shishmanov attributed responsibility to more than just the Ottomans. Byzantium, he claimed, also had a share in this, since it

failed to elevate humanity in Eastern Europe to new spiritual, artistic, moral and social heights, as this took place in Italy during the Renaissance and [the Age of] Humanism. Its merit lies elsewhere: in contrast to Rome, it converted to Christianity and civilized specifically the barbarian tribes *by using their native dialects*, which was later of great importance for the development of their national literatures.²⁰⁸

But in Byzantium and the Balkans, even before they fell to the Ottomans, there failed to develop the large-scale and deep socioeconomic changes that had conditioned and prepared the Western Renaissance—above all the transition from subsistence to capitalist economy and the emergence of a “conscious citizenship.” The “weak socioeconomic development” was what made these areas too “immature to embrace the innovative ideas of the Renaissance,” a fact most clearly demonstrated by “Byzantium, which really has certain merits for the genesis of the Italian Renaissance, [but] could not release itself for a long time, even after the fall of Constantinople, from the medieval scholastics. For the influence of one culture over another always involves some similarity in social psychology and in the social order.”²⁰⁹ Shishmanov thus moved the beginnings of the Balkan “socioeconomic backwardness” back to the pre-Ottoman, Byzantine past—a thesis that would come to the attention of (mostly economic) historians only during the last quarter of the twentieth century.

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The new generation of Serbian historians, who came of age professionally at the turn of the century, lived at a time of intense national-political ferment. Serbia had emerged victorious from the Customs War with Austria-Hungary, which added to the assertiveness and nerve of Serbian nationalism. In 1905 the Croats and the Serbs of the empire concluded a coalition that made a

other hand, Ivanov was among the Bulgarian scholars commissioned by the Bulgarian state to counter the Greek (and Serbian) propaganda and territorial claims as regards Macedonia during and after the World War I.

208 Ivan D. Shishmanov, “Zapadnoevropeysko i bălgarsko vāzrazhdane” (1928), in Ivan D. Shishmanov, *Izbrani sāchineniya*, vol. 1 (Sofia: BAN, 1965), 76–77.

209 *Ibid.*, 78.

future South Slav union look less unlikely. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was administered since 1878 and annexed in 1908 by the Habsburg monarchy, agitation was rising, not without considerable help from the Serbian state. The “military propaganda” in Ottoman Macedonia and the adjacent areas (also called “Southern” or “Old Serbia”) was in full swing. As could be expected, few Serbian historians could, or wanted to, remain detached from the contemporary “needs and interests” of their nation in such critical times. The way they interpreted these interests and the “lessons” they drew from the medieval past were not always congruent, but they were all motivated by the ambition to buttress with the instruments of modern science the role that Serbia was supposed to play in the impending transformations in the Balkans.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Romantic approach to history, and Srećković in particular, encountered severe criticism from the critical school of Serbian historiography.²¹⁰ Its founder, Ilarion Ruvarac (1832–1905), challenged the Romantic glorification of the medieval past and pleaded for an objective knowledge and critical use of historical sources. Among his illustrious followers were Stojan Novaković, Ljubomir Kovačević, Jovan Radonić and Stanoje Stanojević, who, more insistently and explicitly than their predecessors, identified Serbian history as inseparable from that of Byzantium. In 1890 a group of historians at the Great School, the predecessor of Belgrade University (1905), proposed the creation of a new chair with the unusual title “History of the Middle Ages, with a View to the History of Byzantium.” The idea was not realized due to lack of resources but was suggestive of, as the supporting argumentation went, “the various permanent and close connections of the Serbian lands with Byzantium.”²¹¹ A Seminar for Byzantine Studies was set up in 1906, which until after World War I focused primarily on Greek language and paleography.²¹²

210 The critical historians accused Srećković above all of using as historical sources national epics and folklore, the bulk of which had been collected during the nineteenth century.

211 Ljubomir Maksimović, “Razvoj vizantologije,” in *Univerzitet u Beogradu 1838–1988. Zbornik radova* (Belgrade: Univerzitet u Beogradu i Savremena administracija, 1988), 655–656; Srđan Pirivatrić, “A Case Study in the Emergence of Byzantine Studies: Serbia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010), 483.

212 The first head of that chair was the philologist Dragutin Anastasijević (1877–1950), another disciple of Karl Krumbacher (Maksimović, “Razvoj vizantologije,” 658–659; Pirivatrić, “A Case Study in the Emergence of Byzantine Studies,” 483–484).

One of the foremost Serbian medievalists at that time and into the interwar period, Stanoje Stanojević (1874–1937),²¹³ had the ambitious idea of writing a ten-volume history of *Byzantium and the Serbs*. The first nine volumes were to survey political relations from the settlement of the Slavs until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, while the last one was to be devoted to “the overall cultural impact of Byzantium on the Serbian people.” Only the first two volumes ultimately saw the light of day (in 1903 and 1906). However, in his general introduction, Stanojević spelled out with clarity and force the importance of the Serbs’ historical relationship with Byzantium:

The entire state organization of the Byzantine Empire and its whole culture, material as well as intellectual, with all their results, had exerted a strong influence on the Serbian people right from the moment of its arrival in its new homeland.... Undoubtedly, the Byzantine Empire impacted more strongly than all other factors both its political and cultural history.... The entire political and cultural life of the Serbs until the arrival of the Turks is so intertwined with Byzantine history and imbued with Byzantine influences that [one can say that] Byzantine-Serbian relations during the first ten centuries of Serbian history constitute the core of the history of the Serbian people.²¹⁴

Almost the entire political history of the Serbs during the first five centuries after their settlement in the Balkans, Stanojević argued, was “filled with struggle for freedom and independence, struggle for emancipation from Byzantium”; that was a period when the Serbian nation “moved more and more into the History of Europe and the History of Mankind.” And even if the Serbs’ connections with the West also grew during this period,

the political relations with Byzantium, the struggle against its dominance and the internal disputes in the individual Serbian states around the cultural and political relations with Byzantium continued to absorb the main forces of the Serbian People.... The organization of the state, church, army and administration, religion, literature, education and many elements of material culture the Serbian people had borrowed

²¹³ Stanojević studied under the renowned Slavist V. Jagić and the historian K. Jireček in Vienna. He worked with the Byzantinists F. Uspensky at the Russian Archaeological Institute in Istanbul and K. Krumbacher in Munich. See Jovan Radonić, *Slike iz istorije i književnosti* (Belgrade: n.p., 1938), 509–521.

²¹⁴ Stanoje Stanojević, *Vizantija i Srbi*, vol. 1 (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1903), i, iii.

from Byzantium—either completely or by grafting them onto their national institutions, onto their distinctive national features.²¹⁵

It is remarkable that by “Byzantine culture” Stanojević meant the combination of several disparate elements: the material culture of the Thraco-Illyrian tribes, Celtic culture, Hellenic culture imbued with Eastern elements, and Roman culture. It was this “aggregate” of legacies that impacted the Serbs so massively. Like almost all Balkan historians at the time besides Greek ones, Stanojević believed that the Eastern Roman Empire “had almost nothing in common with the ancient Hellenic states: it was a Roman state with Hellenic culture.” By the seventh century the characteristic features of “Byzantinism”—the Greek language, Hellenic culture and Christianity “as it was understood and developed in the East”—overshadowed the Roman traditions, and the Eastern Roman Empire became a Byzantine Empire.²¹⁶ Stanojević saw this state as a controversial permutation of creative and destructive factors that constantly fought for predominance, hence its continuous oscillation “between strength and malaise, vigor and decay.” But despite the great ordeals and crises it had been through over its long history, the Empire had always managed to withstand them and recover its forces. The reason, according to Stanojević, was that “it was constantly resuscitated by the fresh blood of the various tribes that settled on its territory.” From them it drew not only its strength and tenacity but also its “unusual capacity for recuperation, revival and rejuvenation.”²¹⁷

Not all Serbian historians agreed that there had been such an overwhelming Byzantine presence in Serbian history. Jovan Radonić (1873–1956), another major representative of the critical historiographical school, organized his book *The Past of Ancient Serbia* around well-known milestones of the historical narrative. These included the growing independence, expansion and strengthening of the Serbian state under Stefan Nemanja, Stefan the First-Crowned and Stefan Uroš I, which had brought it within the Byzantine cultural sphere; the organization and later independence of the Serbian Church, whereby “already at that time the Serbian nationality began to identify with Orthodoxy” (though this caused problems for the tighter incorporation of the Serbian lands on the Adriatic); and Serbia’s rise to “the chief power in the Balkan peninsula” during the reign of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321), which had brought about rapid

215 Ibid., iii–iv.

216 Ibid., ii–iii; Stanoje Stanojević, *Vizantija i Srbi*, vol. 2 (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1906), 110, 119.

217 Stanoje Stanojević, *Vizantija i Srbi*, vol. 1, 112; vol. 2, 128.

penetration of the Byzantine “culture and fine and sophisticated way of life.”²¹⁸ However, he pointed out that although Byzantium, then the main cultural center in Eastern Europe, exerted a powerful influence on the spiritual and material culture of the “young and fresh Slavic peoples,” the Serbian spirit at that time was not content with simply imitating the Byzantine style and demonstrated a “striving for independent creativity in literature, legislation and architecture.”²¹⁹ Stefan Dušan “came forward as a successor to the Byzantine emperors” aiming at the conquest of the remaining part of Byzantium.²²⁰ Radonić admitted that Dušan arranged his court “fully in a Byzantine fashion” and that the incorporation of numerous Greek populations impelled him to adopt new legislation that took into account the different (from the Serbian) structure of Byzantine society. Even so he chose to compare medieval Serbia not with Byzantium but with the Franks’ state and other medieval states in “Western Europe.” This was also the case when he discussed the rigorously centralized political structure of Dušan’s empire or Serbia’s social strata in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In contrast to Novaković, as we will shortly see, he juxtaposed the rule of the Nemanjić dynasty with Byzantine absolutism, stressing the role played in state affairs by “the court dignitaries and the state assembly.”²²¹ In the realm of culture—the area conventionally considered to have been most strongly influenced by Byzantium—Radonić preferred to emphasize the intermediary location of Serbia between the two great cultural centers at the time, Rome and Byzantium. Byzantine influence on Serbian architecture and religious paintings was “crucial,” yet Romanic influence was also present. And most importantly, since the latter half of the fourteenth century, the aspiration for a proper Serbian creativity was becoming increasingly visible. The same trend of growing emancipation from Byzantine patterns was noticeable in literature. This tendency, however, was “stalled” after Dušan’s death, when separatism prevailed over the idea of centralization. Radonić, like Novaković, did not blame Byzantium for submission to the Ottoman Turks. Instead he blamed the inability of “corrupted Serbia” to put up effective resistance.²²²

218 Jovan Radonić, *Prošlost Stare Srbije* (Belgrade: Nova Štampanja “Davidović,” 1912), 6–8, 10–12.

219 Ibid., 11–12.

220 The proclamation of the Serbian Patriarchate received the consent of the Bulgarian Patriarchate in Târnovo and of the Ochrid Archbishopric.

221 Radonić, *Prošlost Stare Srbije*, 14–18, 21. Radonić also discussed the trade relations only with the “West.”

222 Ibid., 19–21. Radonić abandons his moderate attitude and critical sense when discussing the Albanians—the hot issue of the day when he was writing his history of Old Serbia and when Austria-Hungary was championing the creation of an independent Albanian

Radonić, therefore, appeared reluctant to either demonize Byzantium or appropriate its symbolic cultural status for Serbia. He was keen instead to assert Serbia's pivotal place between East and West, having benefited from the culture of each yet ultimately moving towards its own original culture and patrimony. This line of interpretation, remarkably enough, would re-emerge in the works of some present-day Serbian Byzantinists (like Ljubomir Maksimović) in reference to a different geopolitical configuration.

The most unorthodox perspective on our subject matter around the turn of the century came from Stojan Novaković (1842–1915). From the 1880s to the first decade of the 1900s he was, next to Ruvarac, the greatest authority in the study of the Serbian past. His dissenting position, one that impacted his interpretation of the role of Byzantium in Serbian history, concerned above all the national consciousness and its relation to state-building in the Middle Ages.

Without confronting the Romantics directly, Novaković sought to expose the irrelevance of projecting modern notions about nation and state into the past. Srećković, for example, had argued that the Serbian kings had launched wars not to invade and conquer but to “liberate and unify the Serbian lands . . . [into] a single organic state,” and that the Serbian “state organization derived from purely national principles.”²²³ Novaković, however, challenged the very idea that the congruence of ethnic and state boundaries was at all relevant for the medieval Balkans and hence that “national unification” had anything to do with state interests.

The Eastern Roman Empire, he argued, was built on the monarchic, imperialistic and centralist basis of Roman law. The major defect of this system was that it soon turned into a personal and despotic rule, where the only source of power was the emperor. That same principle of state was adopted “as dogma” by all those who aspired to the Byzantine throne, whereby “autocracy seized and became entrenched in the whole Balkan peninsula.” For Novaković this autocratic principle was responsible first for the inability of either the Greeks or the Slavs to assimilate and unify the various ethnicities (e.g., the Vlachs or the Albanians) into bigger national entities, in contrast to the developments in the other parts of the former Roman Empire, and second, for the failure of

state on lands once incorporated into the Serbian medieval state. He firmly refuted the existence of an “Albanian people as an entity” and of an Albanian national sense (or even the potential to develop one) “both in the past and the present” (*ibid.*, 8–10; 21–29).

223 Srećković, *Istorija srpskoga naroda* 2, 810–811.

feudalism to develop and strike root in these areas.²²⁴ The local nobilities drew their strength not from their status, as in the West, but from the riches and the lands they could capture. Under such conditions, it was only natural that all Balkan monarchs should pursue the imperialist idea, striving to gain control of the whole peninsula, without much heed for the mutual exclusion of their designs—a fact that opened the door for outside invaders.²²⁵

Nationality had little role to play in this situation: it served only to distinguish the origins of a king, emperor or state, but the people were fully subdued and “did not count for anything.” A conquered land always followed its new master, and the nationality to which this master belonged was also the nationality of the populations inhabiting his lands.²²⁶ “Ethnic consciousness” was thus restricted to the higher echelons of the ruling class and was manifested in the language of the church and the liturgy (e.g., Greek or Slavic). However, that was not the popular language which, just like the ordinary people, was assigned an inferior place. The spoken language drifted away from the language of the church (and “high culture”), as the conservative stasis of the latter increasingly isolated it from the nationality. Hence Novaković’s dissenting observation: “We should never disregard the state of subdued passivity in which the sense of nationality existed at that time. The main characteristic feature of the Middle Ages was the noble, aristocratic supremacy or organization.” What mattered was the state, not the nationality that, by providing the material (productive) base of the state and the ruler, “was a historical factor deprived of any moral initiative.” Novaković’s final conclusions, running against the general historiographical context of the time, sound baldly unorthodox. First, he says, “the

224 Novaković here echoes the then-prevailing views in Byzantine studies in Europe about the “lack” of feudalism in Byzantium, views that were later challenged from both Marxist and non-Marxist positions.

225 Stojan Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja srpske istorije*, in Stojan Novaković, *Iz srpske istorije* (Novi Sad and Belgrade: Budućnost, 1966 [1912]), 87–91.

226 Novaković illustrated this point by citing the examples of the Bulgarian Kingdom, which kept its “ethnic” name despite the complete assimilation of the Bulgarians into the Slav mass, and Dušan’s empire, where the Greek dignitaries had no problem agreeing to obey their new Serbian sovereign as long as their privileges remained in place. The Slavic tribes in the northern half of the Balkans, he also argued, were of the same “nationality” and constantly oscillated between the Bulgarian and the Serbian centers, depending on the “identity” of the state that came to contain them: “The mass of these tribes was worth nothing; it only followed the masters who came to it or imposed themselves on it.” A major consequence of this “oscillation and indeterminacy” was the ethnographic and linguistic mixture of populations (Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 92–95).

sense of nationality among the masses during the Middle Ages was missing completely." Second, this sense was embodied only by "the high classes, the rulers, the nobles (aristocracy) and the clergy." Third, and as a result, the state borders between the Bulgarians and the Serbs, who showed almost no national differences at that time, "had always indicated the borders between their nationalities as well." Therefore, Novaković inferred, if history was to serve its purpose of *magistra vitae*,

we should instantly accept as a first teaching, a final rule for all modern tasks [that] the Middle Ages must be left aside; we must seek [to define] our position on the basis of the contemporary state of affairs, regardless of what had been in the past; we must rely on a real and living power if we want to respond to the people's aspirations about the future . . . The unsavory past should remain history: the life of the people must be rearranged freely and, without second thoughts, be directed to where the fundamentals of modern criticism lead.²²⁷

At that time, such an a-Romantic attitude was characteristic not only of Novaković, as the writings of Ivan Shishmanov in Bulgaria and of members of the *Junimea* circle in Romania indicate. This does not mean that these dissident critical scholars were not complicit in linking historiography (and scholarship in general) and nationalism. What they pleaded for was shifting the battlefield of competing national programs from "historical" to "ethnographic" and "linguistic rights," which also had their (usually more recent) "history." And this shift as well was hardly free of political goals and implications.²²⁸

Novaković's viewpoint on the irrelevance of the South Slavs' medieval past to their present was only one aspect of his revisionist approach to the history of not only the Serbs but the Balkan Slavs generally. He critically "revisited" a

227 Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 96–97. Elsewhere in the same book, Novaković wrote: "An educated people at the present time should pursue unity solely on the basis of completely different bases, adhering to ethnographic data and guidance, with the means of modern culture, without any consideration for dogmatic discussions and medieval traditions" (Novaković 1966, 72). He reiterated the thesis about the irrelevance of the "national feeling" and the incongruence of political and cultural borders in the medieval age in Stojan Novaković, "Les problèmes serbes," *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 32 (1911), 457.

228 While Novaković's purpose was to downplay the historical divisions between Serbs and Croats, Shishmanov's purpose was to prove the Bulgarian character of Macedonia by using ethnographic and linguistic "data" as a more legitimate weapon than the historical claims of Greek propaganda.

series of taken-for-granted issues that shaped the mainstream historical plot. Thus he subtly ironized Srećković's denomination of Eastern Orthodoxy as a "Serbian faith" by noting that the Serbs "took pride in an adopted [Byzantine] culture as if it was their own and very persistently stuck to it." Novaković admitted that "Serbdom and Orthodoxy formed an indivisible whole." Yet at the same time he bemoaned the fact that, at least from the tenth century, the two rival religious propagandas, the Byzantine and the Roman, had split "the same people with the same language into two distinct cultures and two distinct literatures." Since then the Serb people and the Croat people had been at loggerheads and fighting a life-and-death combat, "one for the love of Byzantium, the other for the love of Rome, while at the same time Byzantium and Rome never ceased to treat both with contempt."²²⁹ (Interestingly, Novaković considered the Bulgarians to have been far more fortunate in this respect: because they had come under the exclusive influence of the Byzantine culture from the very beginning, it was natural that all their rulers looked towards the Eastern Roman throne; "the rivalry between Constantinople and the Bulgarian state concerned not civilization but only politics."²³⁰)

More importantly, Novaković directly challenged two myths underpinning the Serbian national narrative—the myth of the ethnic self-awareness and communal feeling of the Slavic multitude that flooded the Balkans from the sixth century, and the myth of the Serbian kings' perennial drive to unify all the Serbs in a single and unitary Serbian state as the rationale for their continued confrontation with Byzantium.

Novaković stressed that the Slavic tribes that invaded the lands of the Byzantine Empire as far as the walls of Constantinople and the southern borders of Morea were fully missing both an "ethnic sentiment" and a "sense of community." Apart from plundering and pillaging, this Slavic multitude did not leave behind a single great deed. They were "an ethnic mass without any form or organization," "*not Slavs but Slavic tribes and brotherhoods*," who lived in a blissful state of anarchy and were strongly attached to their "particularistic tribal life." There was no attempt at any kind of political or national consolidation, "no trace of any kind of political ideas that would have suited such a numerous people." Had the Byzantine statesmen showed a bit more skills and diligence, they would have found it easy to vanquish and organize these

229 Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 69–70. It should be noted that Novaković was inclined to overrate neither the Serbs' state-building potential nor their "primordial" culture and emphasized the anarchy, poverty, "primitive civilization" and lack of culture reigning in the Serbian lands until at least the eleventh century (*ibid.*, 104–108).

230 *Ibid.*, 104.

Slavic settlers as they wished. As it happened, they “tried with all the means of their civilization to subdue the barbarians,” and their effort did not miss the mark: lacking unity, the Slavs readily adapted to the Roman administrative system and adopted the Byzantine civilization, a fact that “exerted a strong impact on the development of this ethnic mass” and on “the very formation of its nationality.”²³¹ The idea of the state was introduced among the Slavs of Byzantium by the “Turanian Bulgars,” who supplied them with the “adhesive” they were lacking and a common orientation—first towards building a powerful state and then towards “conquering the entire Eastern Roman Empire.” In this “the Bulgar chiefs did not think in the least of the South Slavs, of their convergence or national idea. They thought about how to get their hands on power in Constantinople, such as it was, with all its elements and entire organization.” Without openly stating it, here Novaković challenged one of Zlatarski’s main theses: the Christianization of the Bulgarian Slavs and the adoption of Byzantine learning in a Slavic form, according to him, had nothing to do with nation-building; they were adopted in order to sanction the Bulgarian tsars’ exercise of power and conquest of Constantinople. At stake was into whose hands, Bulgarian or Greek, the entire government of the Empire would fall, and nothing else.²³²

Remarkably, Novaković considered not the direct emulation of Byzantium, but the “example and political concepts of the Bulgarians and their tsars Simeon and Samuil,” to have been decisive not only in building the Serbian state but in charting its relations with Constantinople. Ever since its inception, he repeatedly stressed, Serbia had followed in Bulgaria’s footsteps in pursuing a fully independent power that would strengthen and expand the state and thus “satisfy the selfish whims of medieval proprietors [i.e., the Serbian rulers].” And since the Magyars, Germans and Venetians were barring the Serbs’ advancement to the northwest, the only option was expansion to the southeast, towards the center of the Byzantine Empire and Macedonia. Despite the belief of many Serbs to the contrary, Novaković pointed out, none of their leaders at that time were at all concerned about the “sense of nationality” or were moved by the vision of uniting all the Serbs in a single “national state.” What they cared about was the seizure of power and the existing titles (for new ones

231 Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 128–131. Novaković used to stress the role in this respect of the adoption of “Byzantine Christianity” not just as a system of values and social cohesion but above all as a “life-world” molding every aspect of individual and social life, hence nationality was closely identified with the Orthodox faith (see also Stojan Novaković, “Sloveni balkanski i njihova obrazovanost,” in Novaković, *Iz srpske istorije*, 139–140).

232 Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 132–133.

were not allowed); the imperial title came along with the capture of the bigger part of the Empire.²³³ Similarly to Zlatarski, Novaković thus also implied the existence of a gap between the Serbian people (“nation”) and elite that had been caused by the elite’s Byzantinization. But for him that gap was not caused by cultural alienation (as it was for Zlatarski)—indeed, in his analysis Orthodoxy stands out as the only binding social glue in the Serbian society of that time. For him a gap had emerged from the non-democratic and non-national principles of the statehood emanating from Byzantium and imitated by its rivals.

These were the ideas that, according to Novaković, connected the Serbs with Byzantium and that “grew from the complete adoption of the Byzantine civilization and the Byzantine religious ideas.” The emerging picture, although not fully dark, was fairly gloomy:

Thus the Eastern Roman Empire had come to resemble a fenced battleground in which the competitors fought each other for the supreme power. As soon as they came out of the borders of second-order small states, as soon as they, so to speak, expanded a bit, the Balkan Slavs succumbed to the infection of Greek megalomania. In the Eastern Roman Empire itself, that infection raged continuously. [...] To the observer this centuries-old Eastern Roman Empire presents an odd sight: with its weaknesses and its internal unrest it constantly inspired in its generals and rebel vassals the idea to destroy or seize it. In this odd empire everyone without distinction, Greek or Slav, thought only about how to become its master, but no one ever thought to abandon the Byzantine religion or faith. The great achievement of [Stefan] Nemanja is that he definitively elevated the Serbs into the ranks of the known competitors for the throne in Constantinople and placed them among the acolytes of Byzantium, thus detaching them once and for all from the West and from Latinism.²³⁴

The Byzantinization of Serbia during the reign of the Nemanjić dynasty, Novaković argued, went hand in hand with the rise of its “imperialist idea.” The model of the Bulgarian Kingdom of Simeon and Samuil (“whose traces were everywhere”) enthralled Stefan Dušan and became the source of his own “megalomania.” The outcome was similar: lacking practical political ideas to serve the genuine national interests, both empires died with their creators.

233 Ibid., 117–118, 120–121, 133.

234 Ibid., 119–121.

And since “all Serbian state creations were purely personal, without strong internal organization [and] a feeling of unity,” soon after Dušan’s death the “particularistic and individualistic atavism” of the Serbian lords predominated: “The idea of a great empire or a great state was not alive either in the people or among the nobles of that time. This idea was purely Dušan’s...” Political arbitrariness and disrespect for law and order were the other side of this “personal rule,” which also made any political success transitory. Here Novaković not only demonstrated his customary imperviousness to Slavic sentimentality but also proposed a radical revision of the teleological Romantic story about the “preordained” rise of Dušan’s empire to the height of power and about the Serbs’ potential to succeed Byzantium had the Turks not invaded. All of this led to a conclusion that must have startled many of his followers:

For the needs of our age we have nothing to learn or resurrect from what the Middle Ages left us; the principles of our times have nothing in common with the principles of that time. There is nothing to be particularly recorded or highlighted of these sorrowful times; by the deeds or examples of that time one should pass with eyes closed... Today we should look at this past only in order to understand the mistakes made or the examples we must avoid.²³⁵

Novaković did not see his task as determining who to blame for this unsavory legacy, Byzantium or its Slavic imitators—an issue that continued to preoccupy many Bulgarian historians. Both his critical historical method and his political leanings as a voice of the Serbian Progressives led him instead to underline the inherent difference between the medieval and the modern world. His modernist nation-building project found little it could draw on in either the Byzantine polity or its “Serbo-Byzantine” incarnation in the empire of Stefan Dušan.

But despite Novaković’s wide scholarly (and political) reputation, most “critical” Serbian historians were not swayed from their patriotic mission to bring the medieval (imperial) past to bear on the contemporary construction of the Serbian nation. As in the Romantic period, the main actor in the histories of the medieval Serbian state was the “Serbian people,” and the leitmotiv was its “centuries-old” aspiration for “full national freedom” and “state independence” from Byzantium, which continued to act as the main enemy of Serbian unification. Rather than imitating the imperialistic goals of the Byzantine emperors, the Serbian rulers worked “consciously, systematically and hard,” together with the people, to strengthen Serbia politically, economically and culturally, preparing it for the time “when the destiny of the Balkan peninsula would be

235 Ibid., 69, 133–137.

decided." Furthermore, the overall teleological scheme of nineteenth-century historiography remained intact: nothing could stop the "young state" and nation from displaying their full intrinsic potential and rising to prime contenders for the Byzantine legacy.²³⁶ But certain generic differences in interpretation between the Romantic and the critical currents are nonetheless evident.

All Serbian historians discussed so far saw Serbia's history between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries as an "evolution towards Byzantium" (Novaković), peaking with Stefan Dušan's empire. Dušan's ideal, Stanoje Stanojević tells us, was that "Serbia should inherit Byzantium, which had shown itself incapable of life"; he "wanted to create a Serbian-Byzantine empire, a state which would be based on the Byzantine traditions, with a Byzantine culture, and in which the Serbian people and its state would dominate and be the master."²³⁷ But while the national-Romantic canon viewed Dušan's ambitions as both morally justified and politically feasible, the critical historiographic school was skeptical. Through a different route S. Stanojević came to a conclusion similar to Novaković's: that Dušan "had neither the strength nor the talent to carry out the consolidation of the heterogeneous elements" that came to constitute his empire; his plan was "impressive from a political but not from a national point of view."²³⁸ After the Great War, Stanojević would dedicate a special study to this issue, to be discussed in the next section.

...

Alexandru D. Xenopol (1847–1920) was the scholar who dominated the field of Romanian history-writing at the end of the nineteenth century. His great work of synthesis, the multi-volume *The History of the Romanians in Dacia Trajana* (1888–1893), covered the entire history of the Romanian people from 513 BCE,

236 See, as most authoritative, Stanoje Stanojević, *Istorija srpskoga naroda* (Belgrade: Štamparija "Dositej Obradović," 1908), esp. 95, 101, 106, 112–13, 116, 123, 163. See also M.S. Ubavkić, *Istorija Srba*, vols. 1–2 (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1887, 1891); Ljubomir Kovačević and Ljubomir Jovanović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vols. 1–2 (Belgrade: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1894)—this study is considered to be the first synthesis of Serbian history, but it deals only with the period before 1020.

237 Stanojević, *Istorija srpskoga naroda*, 169, 175, 179.

238 Ibid., 187. Stanojević also noted the resistance the proclamation of the empire and especially the independent Serbian Patriarchate evoked among the clergy and parts of the society, particularly after Dušan's death, for having led to the Constantinople Patriarchate's anathema on the Serbian church and state and to numerous misfortunes. Added to the unsustainable internal heterogeneity of the empire, this resistance contributed greatly to the disintegration of Dušan's empire and the reconciliation of the Serbian Church with the Patriarch in Constantinople (ibid., 182–183).

the first mention of the Getae by Herodotus, to 1859, the year of the union between Wallachia and Moldavia. The second volume, entitled *The Barbarian Invasions* (270–1270), dealt with relations with the Slavs, the Magyars and other “newcomers,” embroiled with the theories about Romanians’ migrations and continuity.²³⁹ Xenopol called the whole period between 900 and 1650, which he defined as the medieval period of Romanian history, the “Era of Slavonism.” Throughout this whole era Byzantium is mentioned only in passing, and its direct impact appears negligible compared to that of Bulgarian political tradition and culture.²⁴⁰ The political institutions in the emerging Romanian principalities, Xenopol explained, had their roots in and were modeled after the Bulgarian (and partly the Hungarian) ones; the legal system was “Romano-Bulgarian”; and the Romanian church “remained steadfast in [its] Slavic form of worship,” while the Patriarchate of Constantinople’s attempts to establish its supremacy are qualified as “tendencies of usurpation” and as impinging on the principalities’ sovereignty. Rather than abating, “Slavic Orthodoxy” was strengthened after the Turkish conquest of the Balkans, as many Bulgarian prelates found refuge in the Principalities. Slavic language and culture (*slavonismul*) thus remained dominant until at least the mid-seventeenth century, when it was replaced by the *grecismul* of the Phanariots and, in Xenopol’s own day, by French influence.²⁴¹

In the perspective of our topic, this is perhaps the most interesting aspect of Xenopol’s *History*: the almost complete overshadowing of Byzantine legacy by that of the Slavs. Xenopol deviated from what would soon become the conventional interpretation, which regarded the Bulgarian political and cultural presence to the north of the Danube as little more than a channel for the massive penetration of Byzantine influence among the Romanians before

239 The main objective of Volume 2 of Xenopol’s *History* was to rebuff the Austrian scholar Robert Roesler’s “immigrationist theory” (1871) positing the late migration (in the ninth or even the thirteenth century) of the Romanians from the Balkans towards the lands to the north of the Danube. As in the case of Fallmerayer in Greece, this outside challenge galvanized a series of historical “rebuttals,” which gave a strong push to the crystallization of the Romanian historical canon.

240 Literature in Church Slavonic spread from Bulgaria and Serbia to Wallachia and Moldavia as early as the eleventh century. From the establishment of the two principalities and of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the fourteenth century until the mid-seventeenth century, Church Slavonic was the language of the chancellery and of the liturgy. It was also the language of the educated and the nobility.

241 Alexandru D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, vol. 3: *Primii domni și vechile așezăminte: 1290–1457* (3rd ed., in 14 vols.) (Bucharest: Editura “Cartea Românească,” 1925), 146–205.

and after the creation of the principalities. Ioan Bogdan, who, like Xenopol, emphasized the “overwhelming impact” of the Slavs on Romanian culture, insisted on the positive aspects of Byzantine influence that had reached the Romanians through the Bulgarians during the latter’s domination north of the Danube between the seventh and the tenth centuries. While the Romanians, he wrote, “were departing more and more from Roman culture and becoming savage,” the Bulgarians, “who came like barbarians over us, took from their Byzantine neighbors, under the protective wings of an organized and powerful state, a civilization which was then advanced, that of Byzantium, which was none other than the continuation, in a Greek form with oriental influences, of the old Roman civilization.”²⁴² The historian Demostene Russo went much further by stating, “Even at the time when Slavic influence was omnipotent in the principalities . . . it was Byzantine influence that reigned. For a good part of the Slavic civilization was borrowed from Byzantium . . .”²⁴³ For his part Xenopol referred solely to “Slavonism,” not to “Byzantinism,” and—remarkably—his evaluation of the impact of this Slavic dominance on Romanian culture was not unlike that of the contemporary Bulgarian historians about the effect of Byzantine dominance on Bulgarian culture.

The Slavic language and the cultural forms related to it, according to Xenopol, were “foreign to the nature and [way of] thinking of the Romanian people.” As such they presented, over a full eight centuries, an obstacle to Romanians’ intellectual creativity and advancement. It could not be compared with Latin in the West, since it was “a language of a barbarian people” and was later responsible for the “undivided dominance of the religious ideas on the spirit and consciousness [of the Romanians].” Indeed, cultural Slavonism was one of the main causes for the historical retardation of the Romanians compared to the Latin peoples of Western Europe. On the other hand, the Slavization of Romanian language and culture concerned the “high strata of society” only—the court, nobility and church—not the ordinary people. Xenopol saw in this

242 Ioan Bogdan, *Românii și bulgarii* (Bucharest: Socec, 1895), 15, quoted in Boia, *History and Myth*, 107. On the Romanian “borrowings” from the Slavs in terms of language, literature, popular customs, and state institutions, see Ioan Bogdan, *Însemnătatea studiilor slave pentru români* (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Socecu, 1894). It should be noted that the Romanian scholars from the “critical school” and later periods used to privilege either the Slavic or the Byzantine impact. Thus Bogdan tended to minimize the broader Byzantine impact, believing that “medieval Europe was conceived in its west and center” (quoted in Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 308–309).

243 Demostene Russo, “Bizațul reabilitat” (1915), in Demostene Russo, *Studii istorice greco-române. Opere postume*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol II,” 1939), 11.

the beginning of a lasting and destructive tendency: "Thus we encounter, as early as this era, that dualism with respect to culture that will not leave us in any of the periods of our history: a high class [that is] usually alienated from the mentality of the people, thus tearing apart its moral unity"—first adopting Slavic culture, then Greek, and finally French (the latter being the only one corresponding to the "Latin mentality" of the Romanian people). In the 1650s, according to Xenopol, the modern period of Romanian history began, "which was characterized by the predominance of Greek influence (*grecismul*), first in culture and soon after in the whole political and social life of the high strata [of society]."²⁴⁴ The parallels with Zlatarski's interpretation of the impact of Byzantine cultural influence on the Bulgarians are remarkable. But even if Xenopol shared the Romantic negativism towards the Greeks, he was not interested in projecting their "harmful" impact back on Byzantium (whose direct influence on the Romanians he never considered to be significant anyway). Xenopol had no serious interest in Byzantine-Romanian relations and preferred to measure the Greek factor in the context of the Ottoman system of administration and the modern history of the Romanians, not as a revived remnant of a distant past.

Significantly, his engagement with Byzantine history came about only in reaction to a provocative Greek stance on the question of the Balkan Vlachs ("Aromanians"). In 1890 the Parisian journal *Revue de géographie* published an article, "Les Roumains," in which the anonymous author ("un Hellène") maintained that the historical research of Greek scholars indicated that "there was nothing in common between these "Greco-Vlachs" [*sic*] and the populations north of the Danube." The Romanians could not allow such an argument to go unanswered.²⁴⁵ Following the division of the Roman Empire, Xenopol retorted,

244 Xenopol, *Istoria românilor*, vol. 3, 205–206; vol. 6, 178–179; vol. 7, 7; vol. 8, 171–172. Xenopol argued that a similar process of "Grecization" of culture, mainly through the church, had been underway in the Bulgarian lands as well during that period (*ibid.*, 71–72). He also considered Grecism much more dangerous than Slavonism precisely because the latter was "a form of thought, uncoated with political goals to dominate and oppress," while the former used political power to strengthen its domination and "suppress Romanian culture" (*ibid.*, vol. 8, 237; vol. 9, 6).

245 "Needless to say, no one in Bucharest was naive enough to suppose that the Vlachs of Perister or Pindus could ever be united with Romania, in however loose a form; and the money expended on this propaganda was in the nature of bread cast upon the waters... When Count Goluchowski [the minister of foreign affairs of Austria-Hungary, 1895–1906] bluntly asked Take Ionescu [Romanian minister in several cabinets] what possible use a group of Romanians in the Pindus could be to Bucharest, that statesman replied that they might become 'an element of compensation at the right moment'"—

the space inhabited by the Romans south of the Danube fell within the Eastern part. However, even if this part was Hellenized, thus becoming a Byzantine Empire, this was a cultural, not an ethnic phenomenon. Furthermore, after 1185 (the year of the “Vlach uprising,” after which the “Vlach-Bulgarian Kingdom” was set up) the territories inhabited by the Vlachs split from the Empire and the dependent relations disappeared. Therefore, the Romanian historian concluded, the Greeks, who claimed the inheritance of Byzantium, had no right to vindicate domination over the Macedono-Romanians, since the latter overthrew Byzantine rule and were later subordinated to the Ottomans.²⁴⁶

Xenopol's prominent work, therefore, was far from integrating Byzantium into the Romanian narrative and even further from the Byzantinist discourse that his students and successors were soon to develop. He was perhaps the most outstanding representative of that cohort of Romanian historians who, ever since the Enlightenment, saw the (Slavo)-Byzantine influence on Romania as the major cause of its inferior position vis-à-vis the Latin West and as having disrupted its “organic” development as a Latin country. This construal did not end with Xenopol; after him, however, it had to coexist with and confront a range of contesting interpretations.

The dawn of the twentieth century saw the signs of a radical re-evaluation of the place of Byzantium in Romanian culture and history. Byzantine studies were introduced as an academic discipline in 1907, when a Chair of Byzantine Philology was founded at the Faculty of Literature in the University of Bucharest led by Constantin Litzeica, who had specialized in Byzantine literature under Karl Krumbacher. In 1913 it was renamed the “Chair of History of Byzantine-Romanian civilization.”²⁴⁷ Behind this institutional thrust was the conviction, formulated already by C. Erbiceanu, C. Litzeica and G. Murnu, that research in the “national language, literature and history” was impossible without knowledge of Byzantium and the Byzantine sources.

It should be noted that the interest in Romanian-Byzantine themes evolved concurrently with a “regionalist turn” in Romania's political agenda. The early twentieth century was the period of a very active Balkan policy, when Romania aspired to the role of principal regional power and arbiter of the Balkans and

Robert W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Romanians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 384.

246 Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 266–268.

247 The decision for this name came from the Greek parliament, despite the critiques of several Romanian historians, including Ioan Bogdan, the then-dean of the Faculty of Literature, who commented on the absence of an object of study since “such a civilization had never existed” (Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 320).

when it was establishing itself as the protector of the Aromanians who inhabited some parts of the peninsula. An imperial vision of the Romanian past fit these new horizons. The ultimate triumph, just around that time, of the Daco-Roman synthesis as the accepted formula of the Romanians' ethnogenesis indicated the need for a wider perspective on Romania's history, bringing together indigenist and universalist elements.

The first strong impetus in this direction came from a Greek. Since 1915, Litzica's successor at the Chair of Byzantine Philology was Demostene Russo (1869–1938). Russo was a native of Ottoman Eastern Thrace who moved to Romania in 1894; he was also a student and follower of Spyridon Lambros.²⁴⁸ Russo was among the first to venture into rehabilitating the historical role of Byzantium generally and for Romanian history in particular. In his book *Hellenism in Romania* (1912) and his inaugural university lecture of 1915, suggestively entitled "Byzantium Rehabilitated," Russo set out to elucidate the historical justification for such rehabilitation and chart the "desiderata of Romanian Byzantinology."²⁴⁹ With arguments reminiscent of those of Dimitrios Vikelas and Ivan Shishmanov, he attributed the long-standing negative attitude toward the Eastern Roman Empire to the fact that, until a few decades earlier, knowledge about it had been drawn "from the surveys of the Western Catholics—the mortal enemies of the Orthodox East—and from the epigrams [sic] of Montesquieu, Voltaire and Gibbon." More than anyone else, Gibbon had contributed to the slandering and denigration of Byzantium, due to his inability to overcome his prejudices against Christianity and acknowledge the political importance of theological problems. Gibbon's fundamental error, according to Russo, was that in the millennial history of the Byzantine Empire he saw nothing but continuous decay. "In what kind of decline is an empire," Russo asked rhetorically, "which produces the most significant civilization of the Middle Ages, which Christianizes and civilizes a large part of Asia and Europe?" Equally responsible for the denigration of Byzantium were classical philologists and art historians, who "were disgusted" when failing to discover the pure Attic forms in Byzantine literature and art.

248 Demostene Russo received his philological and historical education in Athens, Berlin and Leipzig. He became a professor in 1915, director of the Seminar of Byzantine Philology at the University of Bucharest, and a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy in 1919.

249 Demostene Russo, *Elenismul în România. Epoca bizantină și fanariotă* (Bucharest, 1912), reprinted in Demostene Russo, *Studii istorice greco-române*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă "Regele Carol 11," 1939), 487–541; Demostene Russo, "Bizanțul reabilitat" (1915) in *ibid.*, 3–15.

Like Vikelas, Russo launched his “rehabilitation campaign” by pointing out that the “defects” attributed to the empire—or rather the reasons why Byzantine and Byzantinism had acquired a pejorative meaning—were not at all limited to Byzantium. Most crucially, due to the accumulation of sources and the upsurge of Byzantine studies—notably in Germany (around Krumbacher), Greece (Lambros) and Russia (Uspensky)—scholars “have reached a completely different opinion of Byzantinism” and “a different appreciation of Byzantine culture and history.”²⁵⁰ The empire was no longer compared to Hellas but was “studied in itself as a creation of the environment in which it was produced.” It began to be valued not as a continuation of Hellas and Rome but as a “freestanding unity” whose culture had its “moments of decline, but also brilliant periods of rebirth and glory.” The millennial survival of the empire against incessant barbarian assaults testified, according to Russo, to its “extraordinary vitality, civic virtues, and superior organization.” And if it ultimately succumbed to the Turks, “the blame largely belonged to Western Europe, whose Fourth Crusade had delivered it a blow from which it never recovered.” Commenting on the shift of attitude, Russo noted that Byzantinophobia was being replaced by Byzantinolatry—a trend he himself was actually an accomplice to. He pointed to the “inestimable services” that Byzantium rendered to humanity and Europe in particular by resisting and weakening for a century the aggressive Turks. Otherwise, Turkish armies would have reached London unimpeded and “imposed on the whole of Europe the Koran instead of the Gospel.” The empire had also Christianized and civilized the peoples with whom it came in contact and had kept the first reliable testimonies about their past. Finally, thanks to Byzantium, “the masterpieces of Hellas were transmitted to Western Europe.”

It is easy to notice the close alignment of Russo’s views with those of Vikelas and Shishmanov and, as elsewhere in the region, the inspiration they drew from the upsurge and new status of Byzantine studies in Europe. But they are also of interest to us because they come from a Greek scholar specialized in Byzantine-Romanian relations and are thus indicative of the contemporary Greek interpretation of these relations. Greek-Romanian connections, claimed Russo, had begun long before the fall of Constantinople in 1453: “for many centuries the Danubian Principalities were under Greek influence and have received from Byzantium plenty of cultural borrowings” related to language, customs, faith and institutions. These borrowings took place, on the one hand, via direct contact of the Romanians with the empire

250 Russo also mentions Rambaud, Schlumberger, Diehl, Gelzer, Neumann, Finlay, Bury and Sathas as having contributed to the “full rehabilitation” of Byzantium (*ibid.*, 3).

(though Russo did not specify when and where these direct contacts took place), then the Greek immigrants to the Principalities after 1453, and continued “to a more pronounced degree” during the Phanariot era. Most crucially, the influence of Byzantine culture reached the Romanian space in the garb of Slavonism, which, Russo argued, contrary to Xenopol, was merely a form of Byzantine culture. “Even at the time when the Slavic influence was omnipotent in the Principalities, it should not be forgotten that it was the Byzantine influence that reigned”; “in reality Byzantinism held sway, initially under Slavic etiquette.”²⁵¹

Thus instead of minimizing the weight of Byzantine culture during the (late) Phanariot domination in favor of that of the Enlightenment—a strategy adopted by most Romanian “revisionist” historians—Russo recalibrated its value and status. Instead of emphasizing Byzantium’s intermediary function between ancient and modern Hellenism, as most of his compatriots were doing at the time, he advocated the “freestanding” eminence of Byzantine culture which, although inherently Greek in character, deserved to be appreciated and studied in its own right. There is much to commend about Russo’s de-stigmatization of Byzantium and insistence on the collection and critical edition of “Greek” sources as an indispensable resource for the understanding of Romanian history. At the same time, his radical devaluation of the Slavic cultural and political heritage as merely nominal, without engaging with the opposing arguments of Ioan Bogdan or Alexandru Xenopol, reflects a political rather than a “positivist” stance, which more accurately reflected the imperial visions of the Greek state than the actual state of historiography in Romania.

The reassessment of the “Byzantine factor” in Romanian history was closely linked with the increase of literature in a number of related academic fields. In 1914 Oreste Tafrali (1876–1937), a professor at the University of Iași, an archaeologist and historian of art trained in the French school of Byzantine studies under Charles Diehl, published his *Byzantium and Its Influence on Our Country*, where he discussed both direct Byzantine influences and those “brought by other peoples won over by the Byzantine culture.”²⁵² Research in medieval philology, theology and church history, law, art history, the Romance-speaking population south of the Danube, numismatics, and even national

251 Ibid., 10–11.

252 Orest Tafrali, *Bizantul și influențele sale asupra țării noastre* (Bucharest: Institutul de arte grafice, 1914). In this largely popularized account, the author focuses on the growing Byzantine influence after 1453 and especially during the Phanariot period.

psychology (Dumitru Drăghicescu) considerably broadened the sphere in which Romanian and Byzantine studies interacted.²⁵³

Before World War I, Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940), the most influential Romanian historian in the first four decades of the twentieth century, became the emblem of the new view of Byzantium in association with Romania's new regional role. Significantly, Iorga disagreed with many of Russo's assertions, although he himself was the main champion of incorporating the Byzantine legacy in the Romanian historical canon. He accepted neither the thesis of the centuries-long Greek influence on the Principalities ("significant and valuable" as it had been) nor that of the purely nominal Slavic influence "only because at the basis of the South Slav culture was the Byzantine model." All in all, Iorga (and Vasile Pârvan) accused Russo of having infused "Greek nationalist spirit" and "pan-Hellenic propaganda" into his interpretations of Byzantine history and Greek-Romanian relations, as well as of "lack of knowledge about Romanian history."²⁵⁴ Given Iorga's own interpretations, which will be discussed below, one can understand his annoyance at the fact that a "foreigner" should have taken up these, for him, crucial issues and given them a nationalist slant contradicting his own nationalist one.²⁵⁵

To understand Iorga's interpretation of Romania's relation to Byzantium, we have to bear in mind his complex and seemingly contradictory profile as a scholar. On the one hand, he was the model and standard-bearer of Romanian nationalism, who had authoritatively elaborated on the autochthonism, continuity, national specificity, and unity of the Romanians. On the other hand, he championed Romanian civilization's European belonging and mission, which prevented him from relapsing into cultural autarchy and isolationism and stimulated him to emphasize the "reciprocal dependence of civilizations" resting on "most ancient common bases."²⁵⁶ One might argue that it was his virulent nationalism, seeking to create an honorable place for the Romanians in European history and civilization, that led him to look for a "broader integrative space," to stress interdependencies and cultural exchanges, and to try to associate the Romanians with the big "universalisms"—Latin identity, Byzantium and East-West transmissions. Such scholarly projections, at the same time, mirrored Iorga's concerns as a political figure, where the national

253 For an overview, see Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 349–359.

254 Nicolae Iorga, *Un om, o metodă și o școală* (Bucharest: n.p., 1940).

255 Iorga's final judgment on Russo is eloquent: "He did not like this country. Having been linked to the church, the school, the press in his country, he had nothing in common with us but this [university] chair" (*ibid.*, 21).

256 See Boia, *History and Myth*, 65.

and the supranational coexisted in an apparently uncontroversial way. “The new state of affairs in the Balkans” following the two Balkan wars (1912–1913), he argued, had brought home a new realization of the commonalities between the peoples of Southeastern Europe. In this process the Romanians had to redefine their regional role “in accordance with the historical development of the Romanians and with a tradition that no one can seriously think to deny [them].”²⁵⁷

In weaving his Romanian-Byzantine narrative Iorga pursued, often together or in parallel, several mutually reinforcing strategies. One was to refute that the South Slavs had a right to consider themselves adequate counterparts of or rightful heirs to the Byzantine tradition and culture. Another one was encapsulated in the notion of *Romanité orientale* as a historical unity bringing under a single national category the Romance-speaking population, which was scattered throughout the Balkan peninsula and politically circumscribed by the Byzantine, the Bulgarian and the Serbian medieval states, and the Romanians north of the Danube. The third, and key, strategy concerned the Byzantine survivals in the post-Byzantine era and was captured by Iorga’s acclaimed (often for reasons only superficially related to its original meaning) formula “Byzantium after Byzantium.” It should be noted that, in his case, the division between pre-war and interwar periods is hardly applicable, as many of the themes he would elaborate on at length in the 1920s and 1930s were already present in different programmatic texts at the beginning of the century. Therefore, in what follows, both the separate examination of the aforementioned strategies and the chronological split between discrete periods is undertaken solely for analytical purposes and for the sake of chronological consistency.

Iorga was the first regional historian to highlight the significance of the shared history and culture of Southeastern Europe for the understanding of national histories. A major component of this common legacy, next to the Daco-Thracian-Illyrian substratum and the Roman “order,” was the “neo-Roman” one—the Byzantine tradition. On many occasions since the 1910s Iorga would insist that this tradition and the Orthodox Christianity played a considerable role in the “particular [culture] common to all Southeast Europe,” in the essential unity and civilizational “synthesis” between all those peoples. At the same time, however, he made it clear that this fact did not mean that all the peoples in question had contributed to (the perpetuation of) this common culture or that they were entitled to an equal share of its heritage. After the Slav language

257 Nicolae Iorga, *Les Roumains et le nouvel état de choses en Orient* (Vălenii de Munte: Neamul Românesc, 1912), 19 ff.; Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria statelor balcanice în epoca modernă* (Vălenii de Munte: Neamul Românesc, 1913), 5.

gained the upper hand over Greek, Iorga stated at the International Congress of Historical Studies in London in 1913, the Bulgarians and later the Serbs had failed to produce a single great poet, a single chronicler or religious literature comparable to those of the Byzantines: “these converts and imitators,” as Iorga called them, were “completely lacking” an original high culture.²⁵⁸ Nor had they contributed to the salvation of the Byzantine legacy: “The Bulgarians and the Serbs are not successors but imitators of Byzantium of Constantinople, since their states coexisted with the original Empire, and their downfall is contemporaneous with that of this Empire.”²⁵⁹ The Romanians, on the other hand, had an “undeniable tradition” of Byzantine succession. In a book on the modern history of the Balkan peoples, published in the wake of the Balkan wars in 1913, Iorga wrote, “There was a time when it appeared that the entire Byzantine Balkan legacy would be inherited by the Romanian princes who, as the only ones who remained standing among the Christians, showed that they wanted to preserve it and that they were capable of sacrificing themselves for it.”²⁶⁰ In the 1930s he would elaborate further on this thesis and devote a special study to it.

It should be noted that Byzantium for Iorga provided the form, the exterior enfolding a living yet foreign content—the nations inhabiting the Balkan lands. His aim, therefore, was “to elucidate the relations which existed between this great *theoretical reality of the Empire* and the *national realities* . . .”²⁶¹ Considering the late appearance of the Romanians in the historical records, this task was neither easy nor unproblematic. It took Iorga’s highly speculative bravura, visionary flair and opaque and ornate style to accomplish it with such a resounding effect.

Two thematic focuses were of paramount importance in building the Romanians’ connection to Byzantine history. Like the Transylvanian and Romantic historians before him, Iorga made much of the Romance-language-speaking populations (the Vlachs) south of the Danube, whom he saw as an integral part of the Romanian ethnos. These large populations (larger than the

258 Nicolae Iorga, *Roumains et Grecs au cours des siècles à l'occasion des mariages princiers* (Extraits de “Deux communications au troisième congrès international d’études historiques, à Londres,” par N. Iorga; Bucarest 1913) (Bucharest: Cultura Neamului Românesc, 1921), 12. It should be noted that Iorga could read neither Bulgarian nor Serbian.

259 Nicolae Iorga, *Choses d'Orient et de Roumanie* (Bucharest: P. Suru, 1924), 40.

260 Iorga, *Istoria statelor balcanice*, 8.

261 Nicolae Iorga, *Influences étrangères sur la nation roumaine. Leçons faites à la Sorbonne* (Paris: Librairie universitaire J. Gamber, 1922), 31 (*italics added*). This is how Iorga entitled one of his studies, *Formes byzantines et réalités balkaniques* (1922).

Bulgarians and the Serbs, as he rarely neglected to hint) played a major role in the history of both Byzantium and the Bulgarian state. The Romanians, he said, could be considered “latecomers” on the Balkan political scene only concerning the creation of a “state in proper national, independent forms,” because “long before 1300 . . . they were taking part, under the names of their barbarian masters Pechenegs, Cumans and Tartars, in the wars for the possession of Constantinople.” The Byzantine emperors and the Bulgarian tsars recruited their armies from among these “brave and enduring” descendants of the “Thraco-Romans,” who had preserved “the memory of their special condition, which was in no way inferior to that of the *homines romani* in the West under the old [Roman] Empire and after its fall.”²⁶² The other related theme concerned what Iorga called “demotic Romanias” (*Romanii populare*), that is, the allegedly autonomous organization of the indigenous Romanized (therefore, in Iorga’s reading, Romanian) population north and south of the Danube and its survival in the face of the numerous and massive barbarian invasions during the early Middle Ages.²⁶³ Their existence was made possible by the “great tolerance of Byzantium” for the local autonomy of the diverse Byzantine populations, while their democratic foundations and principles of government versus the autocratic principle of the East constituted a major distinction of the Latin West.²⁶⁴

Both themes converged in Iorga’s notion of “Romania”—the vast space of a continuous eastern Romanity, whose centers were the Adriatic littoral and the two banks of the Danube River, and whose enclaves were spread all over the Balkan peninsula in between.²⁶⁵ There Latinism “continued to live . . . according to the ancient traditions.” It continued to nourish the “creative power of the Roman element,” from which the originality and all the transformations of the Middle Ages derived, as well as the idea of the restitution of the “single” Roman empire. As such, it partook in what he called “the true unity of the history of the Middle Ages.” By upholding the “spirit of the West” in the East, this

262 Iorga, *Roumains et Grecs*, 13–14. See also Nicolae Jorga, *The Byzantine Empire* (London: J.M. Dent), 1907.

263 See, for example, Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 220–221.

264 Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 286.

265 According to Iorga, Eastern Romanity was the outcome of the massive demographic influx of and colonization by Italian peasants already before the incorporation of the Balkan provinces and Dacia in the Roman state, which led to the de-nationalization (that is, Romanization) of the Thraco-Illyrians. Demographically, therefore, these Roman colonists far outnumbered the local population.

Romania constituted an important “element of integration” of the East and the West.²⁶⁶ In this perspective, the Romanians appeared as bearers of the same imperial tradition as the Byzantines. They were neither rivals nor imitators of the Roman imperial idea (as the Bulgarians and the Serbs were)—they were its embodiment and carriers, along with the Byzantines.

These same themes, on the other hand, outlined fields of contention with the Bulgarian and the Serbian historiographies (discussed elsewhere in this volume), with which we are not directly concerned here. It is noteworthy, however, that by claiming that the Vlachs participated meaningfully, at times decisively, at the highest level in the structure of the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms, Iorga practically “smuggled” the Romanians into Byzantium via Bulgarian history and opened up another channel of communication and “interpenetration” of Romanian and Byzantine culture. To a large extent Iorga’s narrative about the Romanian past, prior to the creation of the Romanian states, fed off the Bulgarian narrative.²⁶⁷ The aforementioned distinction between “Byzantine forms” and “national realities” was important in this strategy. Byzantium provided the “forms” (“theoretical reality”) for its various peoples, which the medieval Bulgarian and Serbian states had failed to fill with national reality: their forms were “borrowed” from Byzantium and, as such, alienated the people and doomed these states to “a great tragedy”—the ruinous ambition to conquer Constantinople. The “definitive forms” of the Romanian state as they had emerged in the fourteenth century, on the other hand, rested on a completely different basis: that of “the *popular conception of an Empire* with no seat in either the Ancient Rome or the New Rome, but *whose ideal seat was in the very consciousness of [the Romanian] nation.*” The leader of such a state—“a local emperor, a *domn*, created from the midst of the popular life”—linked his imperial dignity not to the possession of Constantinople but to his own national milieu and the benefit he could render to his nation. Thus, while the Slavs were completely exhausting their

266 See Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 178–180, 193; Mihail Berza, “Nicolas Iorga, historien du moyen âge,” in *Nicolas Iorga. L’homme et l’oeuvre*, ed. D.M. Pippidi (Bucharest: Editions de l’Académie RSR, 1972), 141–144.

267 The collection of lectures, *Formes byzantines et réalités balkaniques. Leçons faites à la Sorbonne* (Bucharest and Paris: H. Champion, 1922), can serve as one of the many examples. In fact, the majority of the leading Romanian historians at the time—E. Hurmuzaki, A.D. Xenopol, Dimitrie Onciul, Constantin Erbiceanu, George Murnu—compensated for the lack of reliable evidence about the “core” Romanian lands by focusing on the history of the Balkan Vlachs and their role in the Second “Romanian-Bulgarian” Kingdom. (See also Roumen Daskalov’s chapter in this volume).

race in pursuit of the impossible possession of Byzantium, “the Romanian patriarchal organism conserved in popular, naive, rural garments the traditions of the [Roman] Empire, anticipating in the Carpathians the principles that would steer the modern era across Europe. . . . It was at the same time an *indelible memory of the imperial dignity* and a *modern creation* coming from the midst of the popular masses.”²⁶⁸

Thus the imperial and the national, the ancient and the modern permeated each other harmoniously in Iorga’s metahistorical narrative about “Romania before Romania.” The negative Bulgarian (and to a lesser extent Serbian) references had a vital function here. In fact, one would think that Iorga had stolen Zlatarski’s interpretation concerning the destructive effects of Byzantium on Bulgaria and reformulated it to serve his own ends. On the one hand, he belittled what Zlatarski (and many after him) considered the Bulgarians’ greatest cultural achievements—the adoption of the Slavonic script and Christianity—while attributing their military feats and imperial growth to the Vlachs. On the other hand, the Byzantinization of medieval Bulgaria, which Zlatarski bemoaned, served as the “bad example” against which the Daco-Roman purity and authenticity of the Romanians could be celebrated along with their deep awareness of being heirs to the Roman tradition. The blind emulation of Byzantium by the Bulgarians and the Serbs had foreshadowed their demise. By contrast, the Romanians’ consciousness of their nationality and imperial legacy made them capable not only of “creatively” continuing another imperial tradition, that of Byzantium, but also becoming heralds of the modern age.

Apart from Iorga, Romanian historiography’s discovery of Byzantium came late. Until after the Great War, scholars in the field focused on philological issues and those related to the history of Romanian medieval literature. This bias was largely embedded in a crucial need: to write the history of the Romanians. As the first Romanian university professor in Byzantine studies, C. Litzica, put it, “for us, Byzantine studies are important for the light they can throw on Romanian history.”²⁶⁹

268 Iorga, *Influences étrangères*, 40–44 (italics added).

269 Quoted in Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 360.

Interwar Historiographic Perspectives between Specialization and Metahistory

During the interwar years, medieval history retained its central place in historical writing. In all four countries the most prominent and prolific national historians, particularly those who embarked upon producing national syntheses, were trained as medievalists. At the same time this period saw the further professionalization and institutionalization of Byzantine studies in the region and abroad. It should be noted that almost the entire first generation and many in the second generation of Balkan Byzantologists in these four countries received their specialized education with Karl Krumbacher or August Heisenberg, Krumbacher's student and successor at the head of the *Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie* in Munich; many of them contributed regularly to the Institute's respectable *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*.²⁷⁰ Other important forums for international exchange and professionalization included the four international congresses of Byzantine studies that took place in Bucharest (1924), Belgrade (1927), Athens (1930) and Sofia (1934). The continuing work on the collection and publication of Byzantine sources and the increasing number of studies dedicated to (issues of) Byzantine history properly speaking were now accompanied by cumulative specialization in the sub-fields of the history of law, institutions, art, and architecture, alongside the traditional preponderance of philology and literature. In the process the amount and quality of "Byzantine studies" rose but at the cost of their increasing compartmentalization. This situation goes some way toward explaining the relatively weak impact of this expert empirical knowledge on (the perpetuation of) the mainstream historical discourses that had taken shape until then.

Until at least the mid-1930s, the (geo)political context operated in the same direction. In each individual national case, the post-World War I peace arrangements solved certain old problems and engendered new ones, which, throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, continued to foment intraregional tensions and historical disputes. If anything, the general anti-liberal intellectual climate and integrationist national projects stiffened the erstwhile nationalist orientation of scholarship, which proved capable of accommodating various ideological positions. It was only in the face of the growing hegemonistic

270 On the Serbian side this cohort included S. Stanojević, V. Ćorović, J. Radonić, N. Radojčić and D. Anastasijević; on the Greek side, Dimitrios Vikelas, Spyridon Lambros and Georgios Hatzidakis; on the Romanian side, C. Litze, G. Marnu, N.G. Dossios and N. Bănescu; and on the Bulgarian side, P. Mutafchiev and P. Nikov.

pressure on the region after 1933 that new regionalist political projects began to emerge, which brought with them new, non-nationalist frameworks of history. Significantly, both the nationalist and the non-nationalist historical schemes drew arguments from particular readings of the “Byzantine legacy.”

• • •

The “Asia Minor catastrophe,” or simply the “Catastrophe,” is the expression Greeks use to describe the crushing of the Great Idea following the rout of the Greek army from Asia Minor under the onslaught of the nationalist forces of Mustafa Kemal in 1922 and the exodus to Greece of more than a million (mostly destitute) Greeks fleeing this area. The dreams of a reconstituted Byzantium, which had united most Greeks for almost eighty years, were over. A whole chapter of Greek history, filled with optimism and expansionist dreams, was closed. But did this entail a “paradigm shift” in the conceptualization of Greek history?

The tension between “Hellenism” (*Ellinismos*) and “Romanism” (*Romiosyne*) continued to reverberate in various public spheres and foment heated scholarly disputes. That was definitely the case with the perennial language question, which kept pitting “purists” and “demoticists” against each other until well into the 1970s. (After World War II and most tangibly in the 1960s, the demoticist movement would migrate to the arts—particularly to poetry and music—and acquire left-wing connotations.) But as far as historiography is concerned, this conflict appeared to have terminated with Zambelios’s impressive “Helleno-Christian” construction, Paparrigopoulos’s historical rehabilitation of the Byzantine Empire and Lambros’s post-Romantic positivist translation. Far from corroding the political and ideological underpinnings of that style of historiography, the Asia Minor disaster amplified Greece’s Balkan sensitivities and the concerns about the security of its territorial acquisitions especially in Macedonia. Paparrigopoulos’s heirs remained doggedly attached to his canon, making only marginal methodological and organizational changes. The leading fora of this mainstream were Nicos Veis’s *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* (published since 1920) and K. Amantos and S. Kougeas’s *Hellinika* (since 1928), along with the Medieval Archive at the Academy of Athens. In the 1930s historical studies in Greece remained under the sway of the nationalist school as shaped by the nineteenth-century models. “With historiography mired in its past and the social sciences virtually nonexistent, it appeared unlikely, if not impossible, that historical writing could experience any sort of revival.”²⁷¹

271 Christos Hadziiosif, “The Historian Nicos Svoronos and His Relationship to the Historiography of Modern Greece,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 17, no. 2 (1991), 37–38.

The story of the institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Greece tells us a great deal about the way Byzantium and its place in Greek history came to be conceptualized during this period. Between 1911 and 1931 at the University of Athens three chairs were established that focused on the Empire—of Byzantine art and archaeology (1911), of Byzantine history (1924) and of public and private life in Byzantium (1931)—and another one combining the study of “middle [Byzantine] and modern Greek philology” (1925). At the same time, the first chair in modern history was established only in 1937. Until then, modern Greek history had been largely regarded as a continuation of Byzantine studies, and the Ottoman period had been described as one of post-Byzantine continuity.²⁷² The interest of the state in strengthening this new field of education and research had already led to the founding, in the 1910s, of the Museum of Byzantium in Athens and the Association of Byzantine Studies. This trend continued in the interwar period with a series of state decrees sanctioning the status of the Byzantine churches and fortresses as archaeological monuments, supporting their restoration and the excavations of Byzantine monuments. Thus, in the 1920s and 1930s, Byzantium, though still far from superseding the glow of classical Greece, moved to the forefront of state-sponsored cultural heritage, scholarly research and public attention.

The focus of this wide network of institutions, as their names indicate, was the study and display of Byzantine culture. During the “long nineteenth century” Byzantium was valued above all for having preserved and transmitted ancient Greek culture and Christian faith to the modern Greeks. The Greek historians’ prime preoccupation at that time was to demonstrate the survival of the ancient legacy through the Byzantine Empire, while remaining skeptical, in the vein of the Enlightenment, of the Empire’s own cultural achievements. After World War I the connection between Byzantium and modern Greece, which Sp. Lambros was among the first to emphasize, became far more important for the Greek historians, thus compensating partly for the fixation on the transmission from ancient times to the Middle Ages. The nature of Byzantine culture changed accordingly. Now it acquired a proper value and was credited with a proper contribution to world culture: Byzantine literature and art, the

272 Vangelis Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis kai i didaskalia tis istorias sto Panepistimio Athinon (1837–1932)* (Athens: Istoriko Archeio Ellinikis Neolaias, Institutou Neoellinikon Ereunon, 2006), 317–320, 379–380; Aikaterini Christophilopoulou, “Oi vyzantines spoudes sto Panepistimio Athinon kata ti diarkeia tou Mesopoleμου,” *Nea Estia* 1610 (1994), 983–99; Antonis Liakos, “Modern Greek Historiography (1974–2000): The Era of Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy,” in *(Re)Writing History: Historiography in Southeastern Europe after Socialism*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer (Münster: LIT, 2004), 357.

Christianization of the neighboring peoples, and above all, its role as a shield for European civilization against foreign invaders were the main elements of its avowed contribution to the world. The Empire was no longer just the savior of the ancient heritage; it itself became a generator and a source of a proper heritage, rendering “services comparable to those of ancient Greece,” as a leading historian put it.²⁷³ All this went hand in hand with the assertion of Greece’s “sovereignty” over this cultural patrimony. Only those elements that attested to the Hellenic character of the empire were worthy of investigation and exhibition. Phaidon Koukoules (1881–1956), the founder of the Association of Byzantine Studies and a head of the Chair of Public and Private Life in Byzantium, in fact paid little attention to the “public” life in the empire, as it was closely associated with Roman institutions. He instead devoted himself to the study of “private” life, which, according to him, embodied the continuation of the popular Greek culture and could serve as “scientific” evidence of its antiquity and continuity.²⁷⁴

As could be expected, the discipline’s expansion was linked to political concerns. After World War I Greece was busy attending to its “legitimate” rights on the newly acquired territories, particularly Macedonia, to which its neighbors also laid historical and ethnographical claims. With the centers of ancient Greece lying further to the south, it was through Byzantium that scholars hoped to confirm the Hellenic character of these lands. The younger generation of Greek historians ardently took up the task of highlighting the Greek nature of the Byzantine monuments and of putting it in a scholarly context. In his September 1913 memorandum recommending the founding of the first museum of Byzantine art in Thessaloniki, only a few months after these lands were conquered by Greece, Adamantios Adamantiou (1875–1937), a student of Lambros and the first head of the Chair of Byzantine Art and Archaeology, pointed out that such a museum would be “a temple of the art and history of medieval Greece” and that the Byzantine monuments gathered in the museum would “bear the imprint of the thought and soul of medieval Greece, passed on throughout the centuries, as an eternal flame of the artistic and historical tradition of the united and indestructible national whole.”²⁷⁵ Adamantiou

273 Constantine Amantos, *Prolegomena to the History of the Byzantine Empire*, trans. Kenneth Johnstone (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hekker, 1969), 176.

274 Phaidon Koukoules, *Byzantinon bios kai politismos*, 6 vols. (Athens: Ekdoseis tou Gallikou Institoutou Athenon, 1948–1957); Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 321–322, 325.

275 Cited in Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 322.

considered Byzantine studies to be a “terrain of political antagonism with the Russians and the peoples of the Balkans.” He lamented the fact that first the Romanians and then the Serbs had organized international congresses of Byzantine studies, thus boosting their claims to the Byzantine legacy, while the Greek delegation had not been very convincing in demonstrating the Greekness of Byzantium and had failed to leave a “dignified impression of the Hellenes.”²⁷⁶ His pleas with the Greek government were heeded, and the third congress was convened in Athens in 1930.

Within the system of Byzantine culture, art came to occupy a key place. Adamantiou’s successor at the head of the Byzantine museum in Athens, the archaeologist Georgios Sotirios, stated in 1924 that as “art [is] the highest expression of the culture of a country, it is understandable that the Museum of Byzantium, which holds Christian objects of Greek art, represents the culture of our fathers in the same way as the Archaeological Museum represents the culture of our grandfathers.”²⁷⁷ What the erstwhile historians of Byzantine art, like Georgios Lambakis, considered to be an essentially Christian Orthodox artistic tradition, the new generation of Greek historians reformulated as an intrinsic part of Greece’s national contribution to world culture. Byzantine art, which epitomized the highest achievements of Byzantine culture, was the continuation of ancient Hellenic art and part of the national Greek patrimony.

As in the previous period, however, the structuring of the historical field in interwar Greece continued to be dominated by the confrontation on the language question. The late institutionalization of Byzantine history as a separate sub-discipline (1924) was due mainly to resistance on the part of the champions of the *katharevousa* (the purists), who identified the preoccupation with Byzantium with the demoticist agenda and insisted that Byzantine history should be part of the general university course on Greek history.²⁷⁸ As the leading Greek linguist, Georgios Hatzidakis, saw it, it was imperative to counter the theories disputing the origins and the purity of the Greek language. The creation of the Chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek Philology (1925) was intended to underscore the link between Byzantium and modern Greece and the importance of *laographic* (ethnological) heritage, especially the “popular

276 Tonia Kioussopoulou, “La délégation grecque au 11e Congrès international des études byzantines (Belgrade, 1927), in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 405, 409.

277 Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 338.

278 Maria Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, “Oi vyzantines istorikes spoudes stin Ellada. Apo ton Spyridona Zambelio ston Dionysio Zakythino,” *Symmeikta* 9 (1994), 169.

literary tradition,” as the transmitter of this national tradition. The Chair’s first head, Nicos Veis (1887–1958), an ardent demotist and an editor of *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher*, has been credited for cementing the link between Byzantine, or what he also called the “middle,” and modern Greek philology through the ages of Ottoman domination.²⁷⁹

Language and ethnography lay at the core of the historical method of Konstantinos Amantos (1874–1960), a student of Lambros, Krumbacher and Diehl, professor of Byzantine history, and member (in 1944, president) of the Academy of Athens. His two-volume *History of the Byzantine State* (1939 and 1947), which was his major work, made little contribution to the field of Byzantine studies. But it won him the recognition of his contemporaries for going one step further than Paparrigopoulos in underwriting the image of Byzantium as a proto-national Greek state and raising it a few rungs higher on the ladder of world culture. In 1923 Amantos made his premises clear when stating that “two thousand years before the Slavs came to its northern borders, the Greek nation was living in Greek lands, and after their settlement the Greek state of Byzantium existed for another thousand years.”²⁸⁰ The underlying theme in his *History* was, unoriginally, the continuity of the Greek nation, whose unity in space and time persisted from one century to the next due to its ineradicable civilizing power. The transference of the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople took place, Amantos tells us, “by degrees to deliver its eastern half to the Greeks.” Originally it was Greek in terms of culture and language (whose spoken forms “might be termed Modern Greek since it . . . had acquired almost all its modern characteristics”), and from the seventh century, with the loss of Egypt and Syria, it became “Greek from the racial point of view.”²⁸¹

With Amantos, however, the stress was not on continuity per se but on its application. Byzantium’s greatest accomplishment, according to him, was the long-standing resistance it put up against various Asiatic, especially Muslim, invaders, thus “rendering supreme service to Europe, to which it afforded time to take shape and develop.” Together with “rescu[ing] the works of the ancient Greek genius and preserv[ing] them for the perpetual use of mankind,” the “defense against Asiatics” made the Byzantine Empire an integral part of European civilization. The incessant wars, however, had prevented the “transformation of the monarchic constitution into a democratic one” and made it

279 Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 225–226.

280 Konstantinos Amantos, *Oi Boreioi geitones tis ellados* (Athens, 1923), 327; cited in Dimitris Livanios, “Christians, Heroes and Barbarians,” 81.

281 Amantos, *Prolegomena*, 174–176.

essential to uphold military rule, which was often arbitrary, causing frequent dissensions and rebellions. But if the latter “never led to more radical political or social upheavals,” it was thanks to the philanthropic activity of Greek Christianity:

[its] multitude of charitable foundations . . . sufficed to meet all the needs of the community and relieved the social distress which was caused by the injustices of military rule. Without the realization of this characteristic work of the Church we cannot properly understand the history of Byzantium or the number of the monasteries that were founded. It was the meeting of charitable needs which alone rendered the monasteries tolerable and indeed indispensable.²⁸²

Rather than a liability, as Gibbon argued, the religious character (and much-castigated monasticism) of the Empire became an essential condition for its social cohesion and political endurance.

Re-evaluating Byzantine literature and art was another focus of Amantos's narrative that went beyond purely political history. He paid special attention to Byzantine poetry, the “Acritic songs” (heroic epics) in particular, which he, following Politis and a long line of Greek “laographers,” deemed to have had survived thanks to the Greeks' oral tradition.²⁸³ The weight that Amantos gave the questions of oral tradition and language was directly linked with the ongoing Bulgarian dispute over the “ethnographic identity” of Macedonia as well as the Greek Communist Party's support for Macedonia's secession based on the right of self-determination. In both his work as a historian and public pronouncements, he set out to prove, with historical, ethnographic and “popular” linguistic materials, the Greek character of Macedonia and thwart “all those conspiring against Hellenism in the recently acquired territories” that were once part of Byzantium. K. Dimaras was probably right in this sense when he

282 Ibid., 177–178.

283 Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 327–330. Present-day literary and anthropological research has refuted this assumption. See, for example, Roderick Beaton, *From Byzantium to Modern Greece: Medieval Literature and Its Modern Reception* (Aldershot: Variorum, 2008). On nineteenth- and twentieth-century Byzantine studies in Greece, see also Tonia Kiousopoulou, “Oi vyzantines spoudes stin Ellada (1850–1940),” in *Apo ti Christianiki syllogi sto Vyzantino mouseio (1884–1930)* (Athens: Ypourgeio Politismou, 2006), 25–36.

stated in his speech at Amantos's funeral that "there has barely been another Greek who had served the national interests in a more scientific way."²⁸⁴

This is not to say that dissenting voices were altogether missing. Ioannis Kordatos (1891–1961), the founder of Greek Marxist historiography, issued the first serious challenge to the conventional scheme of Greek history.²⁸⁵ Starting from a crude Marxist analysis of modern Greek nationalism, in several writings since the 1930s he disputed the continuity of the Hellenic nation. Kordatos argued that the founders of modern Greek historiography, K. Paparrigopoulos and his followers, used false arguments to support their claim that the modern Greek nation was directly descended from the ancient Hellenes and that the Byzantine Empire was Greek. In his *History of Later Greece* Kordatos wrote:

If Metropolitan Greece (Hellada) had lost the glory of ancient Hellenic culture and become a land which, from an economic and social standpoint, had declined, with only the marble tablets left to remind us of an ancient culture, then how can we talk of a medieval Greek state and claim that the Byzantine state was the Greek nation? . . . The name Hellene became a synonym for an evil person, an anti-Christian, and was despised, which is why the name Graeco was accepted, though it also was considered to be something humble . . . It was only after 1054, when the Schism between Catholic and Orthodox took place in the Church, that the term Graecos acquired a religious meaning and was used to signify something that was not Roman . . . ("His mother was a Christian, his father was a Hellene"—Cypriot proverb) . . . Until the fourteenth century the terms Hellene and Hellenic were not encountered in the state language. These names came into use later on . . . And since they lived in the same land as the ancient Hellenes, and Hellenic history was full of Hellenic feats, they regarded the ancient Hellenes as a magnificent people possessing great capabilities, including a great trading ability . . . even the Macedonian campaign of Alexander the Great and his great victories were considered achievements of the Hellenes.²⁸⁶

284 Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 332–334.

285 Kordatos was a member of the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party but was expelled in 1927 due to his dissenting position on the Macedonian question. While basing his analysis on historical materialism, Kordatos upheld the professional standard of objectivity—a principle vilified by Soviet Marxism at the time as a "bourgeois disease."

286 Ioannis Kordatos, *Istoria tis Neoterās Eladas* 1 (Athens: Ekdoseis "2005 aionas," 1957), 20.

Kordatos held that the nation was a historical phenomenon that originated in the late Middle Ages, when feudalism began to recede and the bourgeois class was rising. Catalyzed by long-term social and economic changes, the Greek national consciousness began to emerge among the inhabitants of the great commercial and economic centers of Byzantium no earlier than the fourteenth century.²⁸⁷ In brief, Kordatos questioned the idea of a three-thousand-year-long continuity in Greek history, which posited the ancients and the Byzantines as modern Greeks' precursors and deliberately concentrated on the study of Greece rather than the Greeks. In the interwar milieu, however, his dissenting voice was a lonely one. Even so, it did not fade without reaction—K. Amantos took it upon himself to strongly denounce Kordatos's subversive views.²⁸⁸

All in all, between the two world wars, inquiries into the history of Byzantine art, daily life, folklore, philology and archaeology brought to light new aspects of the "Byzantine period of Greek history." These new directions of research reflected the need for a new understanding of Byzantine culture, impelled by continuing nationalist strife over post-imperial territories in the interwar period and the related rival interpretations of the Byzantine past. Under such conditions, neither the rise of Byzantine studies nor the association of these studies with demoticism brought about any visible change in the tripartite scheme of Greek history bequeathed by the nineteenth-century historians. The inner balance had shifted somewhat away from the obsession with the connection between Hellas and Byzantium towards the unity (and continuity) of Byzantium and the modern Greek culture, but the overall construction and its underlying ideology remained intact. As Amantos brazenly formulated it: "It was only because this Byzantine Empire was based upon the Greeks of Europe and Asia Minor that it was able to confer supreme benefits on European civilization and on a multitude of nations, services comparable with those of ancient Greece."²⁸⁹ The emergence of "Byzantinology" as an autonomous field of research with venues in all four states and international fora came

287 Yanna Katsiamboura, "Marxistikes proseggiseis tou Vyzantiou apo tin elliniki istoriografia," *Kritiki epistimi kai ekpaideusi* 1 (2005), 73.

288 On the Kordatos-Amantos debate, see Livanios, "Christians, Heroes and Barbarians," 80–81. More resounding and consequential was Kordatos's unconventional reading of the Greek Revolution in his book *The Social Significance of the Revolution of 1821* (1924), which provoked an intense political debate on the revolution's origins and agency.

289 Amantos, *Prolegomena*, 178.

to subvert precisely this notion of the Greekness of Byzantium and of the Greeks as its exclusive inheritors and privileged custodians.²⁹⁰

...

The postwar period was a traumatic one for the Bulgarians, who regarded themselves as the great losers of the geopolitical order established after the Second Balkan War and World War I. The distress was all the stronger as the “national disaster” had struck at a moment of growing self-confidence for Bulgarian nationalism both at home and abroad, in the coveted “Bulgarian lands,” especially in Macedonia. Combined with the postwar social and political crisis, this feeling spurred a painstaking search for the roots of the disaster and a remedy for the social and political disruption. While most of the new intellectual “offers” to this end originated outside history-writing, typically in the burgeoning field of “national characterology,” Bulgarian historians were anything but impassive observers.

In Bulgaria the (relative) emancipation of Byzantine studies from the grasp of national history proceeded even slower than in the other three countries. The past tendency of engaging with Byzantine history almost exclusively for the sake of illuminating certain aspects of national history continued to predominate. Byzantine studies were not institutionalized as an autonomous part of education and research.²⁹¹ “The inherent, intimate relationship of medieval Bulgaria with Byzantium,” as V. Zlatarski called it in his opening speech to the Fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, which took place in Sofia in 1934, seems to have impeded rather than stimulated the independent development of Byzantine studies in Bulgaria.

All these trends converged in the works of Petăr Mutafchiev (1883–1943), the most important Bulgarian historian and Byzantinist of the first half of the twentieth century. Mutafchiev’s starting point was the recognition that despite Byzantium’s huge impact on the “historical fate” of Bulgaria and the need, for this reason, to know its history, “hardly any perceptions elsewhere

290 See Kioussopoulou, “La délégation grecque au 11e Congrès international des études byzantines,” 403–411.

291 In the words of V. Zlatarski, Byzantine history was taught “in its connection with the history of other East European peoples who had been in contact with Byzantium” in the frame of the “Chair in East European history (Byzantium, Turkey, the Balkan peoples, Hungary, Poland and Russia),” which was set up in 1921 at the Faculty of History and Philology of Sofia University (*Actes du 14^e Congrès International des études byzantines*, vol. 1 [Sofia: Imprimerie de la Cour, 1935]), 22.

about Byzantium and its culture are as untrue as they are in our country.” He found their source in the national Revival period, when the fight against Greek cultural assimilation on the one hand, and the Greek appropriation of the Byzantine Empire “far exceeding the limits of the objective truth” on the other, engendered a correspondingly overinflated Bulgarian self-image and a distorted image of Byzantium. Remarkably, the reason why Mutařchiev sought to “correct” these misconceptions was by no means less nationally minded: by presenting the Empire, the main and often only adversary of Bulgaria, as a “feeble organism,” the Bulgarians were denying their own “qualities of a healthy, strong people, capable of development.” Therefore, “in order not only for the historical truth to be restored but also to rehabilitate ourselves in our own eyes as a people whose past is not devoid of values, the conceptions about Byzantium accumulated in our country should be corrected.”²⁹²

Mutařchiev’s rehabilitation of Byzantium, conducted with lucidity and erudition, encompassed almost every aspect of its millennial existence and activities: political arrangement and *raison d’état*, cultural and religious prominence, economic, financial, and military power. Despite its enormous wealth, he argued, Byzantium never became a plutocracy (unlike Venice). Nor was its political power used for the accumulation of private wealth or the promotion of “crude mercantilism.” Despite his absolute power, the emperor, who was “a temporary conductor of the providential mission” and whose duty was to look after the interests of the state community, never became a despot. In no other medieval or even early modern society were the popular masses as free to openly challenge or even insult their ruler when he performed badly; no other medieval state had recognized equality before the law and meritocracy in recruiting its higher classes (rather than hereditary privilege). Indeed, in contrast to Novaković (and a long line of post-Enlightenment intellectuals, Western and Balkan), Mutařchiev maintained, “In its deep essence the Byzantine monarchy remained democratic; its supreme task was the preservation of the Eastern Roman community.” In many respects it “was centuries ahead of the medieval Western European societies”: while in the West feudalism flourished and the right of force reigned, “Byzantium was aware that it could rest as a state only on the economically independent rural population.” Hence it was the first and only state that, already in the tenth century, had adopted a law for the protection of the small rural property against the encroachment of rich landowners, as well as the first to practice public

292 Petăr Mutařchiev, *Kniga za bālgarite* (Sofia: BAN, 1987), 24–25. This book, synthesizing Mutařchiev’s previous publications and ideas, was written in the late 1920s and the 1930s. However, due to his ostracism by the Communist regime, it was published only in 1987.

charity.²⁹³ Like Vikelas, Russo and Shishmanov before him, Mutaſchiev denied that the much-castigated “Byzantine” mores and conducts were specifically Byzantine and evoked the history of the Italian Renaissance states, the papacy and the Catholic Church and even present-day “so-called civilized nations” as analogous examples. Moreover, alongside the vicious and corrupted Byzantium, he argued, there was another one consisting “of daring thought and internal discipline, of iron will and indomitable energy, of puritanism and selfless performance of [its] duty.” The Empire owed its might and millennial survival to these moral forces and to its military power, supported by peasant-soldiers defending their own lands.²⁹⁴ To this Mutaſchiev added its unmatched cultural and economic prosperity as well as knowledge and the “complex science” of statesmanship.

While all this was meant, as he himself indicated, to point out what kind of adversary the Bulgarians had to confront and coexist with, Mutaſchiev also took pains “to dispel the widely held delusion that Byzantium had *always* been a Greek empire.” Until the last two or three centuries of its existence, it had been an “empire of the Romans,” where the self-designation “*Romaioi* indicated a state, not a national belonging.” Similarly to Iorga and Novaković, Mutaſchiev maintained that “in the Byzantines’ worldview the question about race and origins was irrelevant.” What mattered was Roman citizenship and submission to the law—embodied by the emperor—and to Orthodox Christianity. And if, after the sixth century, Greek took the place of Latin as the official language, it was not due to Greeks constituting a majority or holding a dominant position in the political life of the Eastern Empire. Instead it was the fact that, since the time of Alexander the Great, Greek had become “the main binding link between the component parts of Eastern Roman society.” It was by virtue of “this external but at the same time visible to everybody feature” that, since the seventh century, the Eastern Empire “appeared to its close and distant neighbors as a Greek state, and its population as Greeks”—a perception further reinforced by the fact that in the thirteenth century, when its territories shrank to the Balkan littoral, Byzantium also became ethnically Greek.²⁹⁵ Mutaſchiev’s

293 Mutaſchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 29–32. In his study “East and West in the European Medieval Era” (*Godishnik na Sofiyskiya universitet*, IFF 21 [1925], 1–34), Mutaſchiev saw the absence of feudalism in this part of Europe as among the key factors making Byzantium, and the countries under its influence, different from the West. This thesis was later criticized, most intensely from Marxist perspectives.

294 Mutaſchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 33–38.

295 *Ibid.*, 26–28. Mutaſchiev came up with a detailed rebuttal of the modern Greeks’ appropriation of Byzantium and its legacy in an extensive article, “Gărtsi, vizantiytsi i elini,” *Demokratiya* 3, no. 1 (1922), 58–63; and *Demokratiya* 3, no. 4 (1922), 84–89.

conclusion, consequently, did not derive from Fallmerayer but aimed to open the access of the Balkan and Near-Eastern “non-Greeks” to the symbolic capital of the Empire and its legacy:

If, therefore, claims to the Byzantine heritage can be raised today and if the arguments of history can be at all relevant where the distinct and awakened nationality with its imperative wants and needs has already risen—this heritage belongs not so much to the present-day Greeks, whose ancestors were a small minority, as to the various other peoples who then inhabited it and who still live in its former lands. For if the merit of the said Greek or Grecized minority to the Eastern Empire lay in the fact that it had given it the official language, the peoples alien to Grecism cemented it with their blood and propped it up with their swords and with the creative genius of their best sons.²⁹⁶

In all these respects Mutafchiev’s reading of the “constitution” of Byzantium signals a clear break with the national-Romantic tradition in Bulgarian historiography. It was informed as much by his erudition as by contemporary developments in Byzantine studies. At the same time, his evaluation, as a national historian, of the Empire’s impact on the “historical life of the Bulgarians” rendered a very different picture, one that maintained a substantial continuity with the revolutionary Romanticism of Rakovski and Botev and the post-Romantic “critical historicism” of Drinov and Zlatarski. Mutafchiev took one big step further in this direction in that he transformed the “Byzantine factor” into the (evil) demiurge of all Bulgarian history. In an essay entitled “Towards the Philosophy of Bulgarian History. Byzantinism in Medieval Bulgaria,” he sought to answer a question similar to the one Zlatarski had raised more than thirty years earlier when seeking the reasons for the meteoric rise and similarly abrupt fall of the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms. Mutafchiev formulated the question in more dramatic, metahistorical terms, seeking to explain what he defined as “the strange absence of continuity, consistency and gradualism in the political and spiritual life of the Bulgarians,” which was marked by “abrupt turns of might and weakness, contradictions, extremes and crises, impetuous and unexpected rises and rapid falls.” The root cause for this “abnormal” dynamism of Bulgarian history was, according to Mutafchiev, “the influence of Byzantinism [meaning the various Byzantine influences] on medieval Bulgaria.”²⁹⁷

296 Mutafchiev, “Gärtsi, vizantiytsi i elini,” *Demokratiya* 3, no. 4 (1922), 87.

297 Petăr Mutafchiev, “Kăm filosofiyata na bălgarskata istoriya. Vizantinizmat v srednovekovna Bălgaria,” *Filosofski pregled* 3, no. 1 (1931), 27–36 (originally published as “Der

Due to their proximity to Byzantium, or what Mutaſchiev called “geographic fate,” the “self-preservation” of the Bulgarians and that of their state doomed them to constant conflict with the Empire. In this conflict “the Bulgarian political and spiritual leaders were forced to borrow *deliberately* from [Byzantium] everything to which, according to their understanding, it owed its superiority.” The growing political rivalry thus led to growing political and cultural imitation. This process pushed the country onto an unnatural path of development, eliminating the possibility of creating anything healthy and durable. The inorganic nature of this path manifested itself in both the mental and the social condition of the people.

For Mutaſchiev, as for most of the historians before him starting with Rakovski, the conversion to Christianity in the mid-ninth century signaled the triumph of Byzantinism:

The adoption of Byzantine Orthodoxy was inevitably accompanied by the spontaneous flooding of the entire Bulgarian land with Byzantine culture, and mainly with those of its features that could be more easily assimilated by a people that had just left paganism. . . . Precisely this rather unilateral cultural influence had fatal consequences for the Bulgarian people.²⁹⁸

Byzantine theological thought, Mutaſchiev stated, “failed to fertilize the popular spirit for true creativity.” It brought confusion in the “people’s consciousness, cut[ting it] off from the faith of the ancestors.” While the conversion to Christianity accomplished the great mission of creating the ideological conditions for the complete merger of Bulgars and Slavs, “the Byzantinism that burst in along with it led to exactly the opposite results: in place of the old ethnic dualism, it created a new division—a spiritual one.” The result was a new dualist situation, where the “vibrant and ever-active” Byzantine cultural model undercut national authenticity and provoked the hardy resistance of the “popular mass that kept its attachment to the past.”²⁹⁹ Along with this cultural and political dualism was a disruption of the nation’s social coherence as a result of what Mutaſchiev called “the law of imitation”: the “unconscious and spontaneous infatuation with the Byzantine models” affected only the highest, ruling strata of Bulgarian society. Having “breached the continuity

Byzantinismus im mittelalterlicher Bulgarien,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 [1929–1930], 387–394).

298 Mutaſchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 189.

299 Mutaſchiev, “Kăm filosofiyata na bălgarskata istoriya,” 31–33.

in the state and the spiritual tradition,” Byzantinism caused the “crumbling of the internal structure of the once-homogenous Bulgarian society, its cohesion [and] material base.” The nation saw in its spiritually alienated leaders “representatives and vehicles of a hostile destructive force.” Thus, in its striving to catch up with and become equal with Byzantium, “the medieval Bulgarian state committed treason against itself,” each upsurge of high culture foreshadowing alienation of the elite from the nation, and each rise containing the seeds of a future fast decay.³⁰⁰

Under such conditions the “instinct for national self-preservation and authenticity [*samobitnost*]” found expression above all in the heresy of Bogomilism, which was not a simple religious sect but an embodiment of a “particular socio-political outlook.” As Orthodox Christianity was “at once the ideology and the weapon of Byzantinism,” Bogomilism came to represent the ultimate “repudiation of all expressions of this Byzantinism in the political and social life of medieval Bulgaria and to stand in overt opposition against the Byzantinized Bulgarian state.” Unlike most of his predecessors and contemporaries, Mutaſchiev saw no creative or constructive ideal underlying the Bogomils’ “socio-political outlook.” He characterized it as a “veritable religion of despair” able to subvert and destroy but not to create—a “social philosophy of total negation.”³⁰¹ Having emerged in opposition to Byzantinism, the Bogomils’ resistance, as Mutaſchiev saw it, proved incapable of spawning a viable alternative to the “decay” of the Bulgarian society, which was sapped by Byzantium’s gravitational pull. The barrenness of Byzantinism, it turns out, plagued even its opponents.

It is through this prism that Mutaſchiev assessed the “Golden Age” of Tsar Simeon—the *ventus loco* of the national historical canon. While admitting that the time of Simeon “was in every respect the most brilliant era in all of Bulgarian history,” his assessment was far gloomier than such an admission should have entailed. Even if the literature produced in Bulgaria during that time had become the venerable heritage of the whole Orthodox Slavic world, Mutaſchiev argued in his unfinished “History of the Bulgarian People,” for the Bulgarian nation the best part of this literary repository produced no benefits. With its abstract and “cosmopolitan-Christian character,” it was “a spiritual product of Byzantinism, which was distinguished precisely by its

300 Ibid., 32–34.

301 Petăr Mutaſchiev, “Pop Bogomil i sv. Ivan Rilski. Duhăt na otritsaniето v nashata istoriya,” *Filosofski pregled* 6, no. 2 (1934), 97–112. See also Petăr Mutaſchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya narod* (Sofia: BAN, 1992), 216, where the author contested the widely shared thesis that Bogomilism was an “ideology of national authenticity.”

anti-national tendencies." The transfer of this literature to Bulgaria stifled the elite's interest in the "national reality" and "drained the living streams carried by folklore." Thus Old Bulgarian literature, captivated by foreign models and values, was alienated from "Bulgarian reality," while the "national consciousness was denied the food without which it could not . . . serve as a bulwark of Bulgarian statehood."³⁰² The political consequences of the spectacular rise of Simeon's empire were no less hazardous. The Bulgarian king's ambition for cultural development and creativity "independent of Byzantium" was overshadowed by his aspiration "to raise Bulgaria in every respect to the level of Byzantium . . . to eliminate the cultural border separating them." In this he greatly overestimated the forces of his people by entrusting it with the mission to replace Byzantium and, consequently, take over its state and cultural heritage—"a task that at that time was outside the reach of any European nation." Had Simeon fulfilled his dream, Mutafchiev maintained, "it would have led to the disappearance of our national individuality," as he would have then become a "Roman emperor" and been "doomed to forget that he was tsar of the Bulgarians." The Bulgarians were therefore lucky that Simeon's desire to sit on the throne of the Byzantine *basileus* was never realized.³⁰³ (To Mutafchiev's exasperation, Iorga, as we could see, made exactly the same argument only to underwrite the "advantages" of the "nationally embedded" Romanian rulers.) Finally, the failure of the Bulgarian state to establish permanent rule over the lands "that ethnically belonged to us" and "become a political organization of the entire [*tselokupniya*] Bulgarian nation" was yet another tragic consequence of the fatal proximity and involvement with the Byzantine Empire.³⁰⁴

To sum up, Mutafchiev extolled the cultural and political grandeur of Byzantium and, in the same breath, bemoaned its ruinous impact on the Bulgarians as "a foreign culture" whose spread "had left behind only depravity or ruins." Byzantium thus appeared as the primordial Other to the Bulgarians, who had set the pattern and mapped the checkered trajectory of their later development. Following a long-standing historiographic tradition, Mutafchiev projected the cultural and political dilemmas of Bulgaria's modern development, especially those emanating from its "inorganic" Westernization, onto the country's medieval past. But while building on the interpretations of Rakovski, Botev, Drinov and Zlatarski about the de-nationalizing and socially disruptive impact of Byzantium, he weaved them into a

302 Petăr Mutafchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya narod* (Sofia: BAN, 1992), 194–195 (first published in 1943).

303 Mutafchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya narod*, 195–196.

304 Mutafchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 103–138, esp. 137.

“philosophy of Bulgarian history,” which allowed him to connect the nation’s past and present more explicitly and forcefully in a single metahistorical narrative marked by cyclical repetitions. On various occasions Mutaſchiev spoke of the “amazing recurrences” pervading Bulgarian history and drew analogies between the fate of the first two (medieval) kingdoms and that of the third (modern) one.³⁰⁵ In this narrative the role of Byzantium in Bulgaria’s Middle Ages prefigured that of the contemporary “West” in the country’s modern history, in that it had engendered a tragic split in the nation’s social body and “psyche” and launched a long-term historical process of inorganic imitation and denationalization. Byzantium, in this sense, appeared to the Bulgarians to be the original “West.”

Interestingly, as a positive contrast to Bulgaria’s “unnatural” dynamism, Mutaſchiev pointed to medieval Serbia, which he saw as an example of delayed, slow and “glamorless” yet gradual and sound “progressive development.” His explanation, again, rested with the relatively weak role of the “Byzantine factor” in Serbian history. Due to Serbia’s geographical location, the Byzantine influence there was never as direct and strong as it was on the Bulgarians, and its political rivalry with Byzantium was never as “inevitable and acute.” The Serbs’ “normal development” was disrupted only under Tsar Dušan, hence the fast disintegration of his empire after his death; yet even Dušan’s Serbia “was not as thoroughly permeated and as deeply corroded by Byzantinism as was the case with Bulgaria under Simeon, Peter and Ioan Assen II.”³⁰⁶

Later academic literature, especially after World War II, would revise and mitigate Mutaſchiev’s portrayal of Byzantium as the evil mastermind of Bulgarian history. However, his “historical-philosophical” interpretation—which, as we have seen, took up a number of pre-existing Romantic themes in Bulgarian historiography—continued to exert a strong, diffuse influence both on the popular perception of the Empire as the archenemy and cultural Other of the Bulgarians, standardized in the teaching of history, and on a wide range of academic and quasi-academic literature debating the Bulgarian *Sonderweg* or national character. Thus, to give just two examples among many, when examining the origins of the relationship between the people and the intelligentsia in post-1878 Bulgaria, Ivan Ormandzhiev (1891–1963), a historian and

305 “If in our historical life, devoid of continuity and durability, there is something regular and permanent, it is precisely the rhythmic alternation of conditions and manifestations fully similar with those experienced in the past” (*Kniga za bălgarite*, 149). See also *ibid.*, 139, 149–151; “Gradăt i seloto,” *Prosveta* 5, no. 5 (1940), 513–530.

306 Mutaſchiev, “Kăm filosofiyata na bălgarskata istoriya,” 36; see also Mutaſchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 152–154.

author of secondary-school history textbooks, resorted to a set of familiar arguments in the vein of Mutaſchiev:

Simeon continued the work of his father and created a single state and a single nation but failed to achieve an internal, national-cultural unification. The Slavic teaching of Christianity encompassed solely the upper crust of Bulgaria—the minority; the lower strata of its nation remained alien to the faith. The unlimited autocracy of Bulgaria, on the Byzantine model, remained alien to the democratic Slavs. . . . The nobility of Simeon's Bulgaria, following the example of the king, developed on the model of the Byzantine aristocracy. . . . Under Byzantine influence, too, the higher clergy turned into a privileged class cut off from the people.³⁰⁷

Lyubomir Vladikin (1891–1948), a legal scholar with pro-fascist leanings, adopted Mutaſchiev's metahistorical model when discussing the historical definition of the Bulgarian nation. He stressed the alienation of the court and the nobility, “steeped in artificial Byzantinism,” from the people and the “nationalist” character of Bogomilism as a “protest of the nation that had preserved its [authentic] lifestyle against the Byzantinism of the ruling elite.” In his parallels Vladikin was even more unequivocal: “For medieval Bulgaria Byzantium was the same as Europe is for the newly liberated and even present-day Bulgaria.”³⁰⁸

Nevertheless, the master narrative of Bulgarian history proved relatively resistant to Mutaſchiev's historiosophic scenario. Though intended to urge the Bulgarians to “turn to themselves” and rediscover their “organic” potential, this scenario was too bleak to serve the purposes of patriotic education and mobilization. In their national-historical syntheses, interwar historians such as Nikola Stanev (1862–1949), one of the most prolific popularizers of history during that period, were far closer to the affirmative post-Romantic reading of Zlatarski than to the meta-historical gloominess of Mutaſchiev. In his *Medieval Bulgaria* Stanev was preoccupied with reiterating the major *topoi* of Bulgarian pride. These featured the “unified and independent Slavo-Bulgarian state” (which had saved the Balkan Slavs from “Byzantine influence and Romanization [and] directed them toward authentic life”); its remarkable rise; the state- and nation-building effects of Christianization and the adoption of the Cyrillic literary code (whereby “the people appeared unified, nationally uniform, as

307 Ivan Ormandzhiev, “Inteligentsiya i narod v nasheto minalo, nastoyashte i badeshte,” *Otets Paisy* 14 (1941), 10, 441.

308 Lyubomir Vladikin, “Natsionalizmăt kato kulturno-politicheski factor,” *Prosveta* 2, no. 3 (1936), 301–302.

purely Slavic in language, faith and spiritual culture"); and Simeon's dedication, yielding to the "yearnings of his people for full independence," to "the complete liberation of the Slavs from Byzantine domination" and to "erecting the edifice of the *third civilization* [after the Greek and the Roman/Byzantine]." Without confronting Mutafchiev's interpretation directly, Stanev stressed that there was no evidence that Simeon's wars were "anti-popular." Following in the steps of the nineteenth-century tradition, he attributed both the downfall of the First Bulgarian Kingdom and the defeat of the second one to the "imitation of the Byzantine social and economic arrangement" and "the Byzantine character of the state power" alienated from its "national population."³⁰⁹

Petăr Nikov (1884–1938), a high-profile historian and Byzantinist, as well as chairman of the Bulgarian Historical Association, emphasized the "magic power," the "unusual and irresistible vitality" of "the Bulgarian idea" and the "glamorous and attractive image of the former Bulgarian state with all its contents" during the time of the "Byzantine yoke" (the eleventh and twelfth centuries), while not alluding to the corrosion of this "state-creative Bulgarian idea" caused by Byzantinism. Nikov disproved the thesis (espoused by Zlatarski) that the Byzantine domination after the fall of the First Kingdom had been accompanied by an "intensive Hellenizing policy in our lands with the specific purpose to Grecize [*pogărchi*] our people." He pointed out both the irrelevance of the modern understanding of the "national principle" at that time and the fact that the Byzantine Empire "had not been a national Greek state, but had a widely international character." "In this state the Bulgarian element was preserved and could develop."³¹⁰

In his analyses of the social classes and conditions in Simeon's Bulgaria, published in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Stefan Bobchev (1853–1940), a renowned historian of law, barely made any reference to the impact of the Byzantine model.³¹¹ As regards the organization of "supreme power," Bobchev contested the thesis that "the Byzantine doctrines concerning the divine origin of authority made any radical change in the system of Bulgarian rule, which derived from the Bulgarian Slav's interpretation of customary law." In implicit contrast to the situation in Byzantium, the power of the monarch was limited by "the [democratic] traditions of the Slav communal outlook on life," embodied in the councils of nobles and the national assemblies. Bobchev also stressed that "a complete understanding always existed between Church

309 Nikola Stanev, *Srednovekovna Bălgariya* (Sofia: St. Atanasov, 1934).

310 Petăr Nikov, *Vtoro bălgarsko tsarstvo 1186–1396* (Sofia: Istoricheskoto druzhestvo, 1937), 5–14.

311 Stephen Bobčev, "Bulgaria under Tsar Simeon—I," *Slavonic and East European Review* 7, no. 21 (1929), 621–633.

and State, while the Bulgarian monarch showed invariable respect for the head of the national clergy.”³¹² Despite the extensive borrowing of Byzantine law, important parts of it were “Bulgarized” to fit the local legal concepts and, generally, in the promulgation of laws, “Simeon showed the creative ability of many a German ruler.”³¹³ “In ancient Bulgaria,” he wrote, “the only conventional law among the popular classes was the customary law.” Despite some “external and accidental foreign borrowings” that had failed to penetrate its depths, the customary law had always remained “an ardent defender of its originality and particularity.” Bobchev added that it “fought with energy and perseverance against foreign influence, especially Byzantine, and refused either to bend under this influence or to borrow anything serious from the Byzantine codes and laws.”³¹⁴ Occasionally Bobchev would indicate certain parallels between Bulgaria and Byzantium, but nothing remotely reminiscent of the reckless infatuation or “inorganic” importation Mutafchiev was so concerned about. If anything, he was at pains to demonstrate, wherever possible, the continuity and strong presence of the “Slavonic traditions,” “concepts,” “self-government” and “customary law” that “battled against the Byzantine influence.” Thus immediately after the conversion, King Boris saw to it that there was “a national Bulgarian priesthood, with liturgical books in Bulgarian” and a “national, independent and autocephalous Bulgarian Church”—privileges that were not obtained by the Russians on their conversion to Christianity (in 988), nor by the Serbs (when they converted in the ninth century). Far from opening the door to the sweeping Byzantinization of the state, Bobchev tells us, the Bulgarian Church “did wonderful work for the development of Bulgaria, above all in the field of culture and education [...] We might almost venture to call this Cyril and Methodius’s idea of cultural unity.”³¹⁵

Here was, although in a more even-handed form, a classical nationalist narrative in a progressive mold. Medieval Bulgaria, Bobchev intimated in

312 Stephen Bobčev, “Bulgaria under Tsar Simeon—II,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 8, no. 22 (1930), 99, 110.

313 Ibid., 104–105. Bobchev devoted special studies to the “transfer” and “Bulgarization” of the Byzantine law (e.g., *Rimsko i vizantiysko pravo v starovremenska Bălgaria* [Sofia, 1925]), which remained a standard reference for the scholars in the field in the following decades (see, for example, Kamen Vitchev, “Influences byzantines sur le droit paléo-bulgare,” in *Actes du IV^e Congrès International des études byzantines*, vol. 2 [Sofia: Imprimerie de la Cour, 1936], 83–86).

314 Prof. S.S. Bobčev, “Quelques remarques sur le droit coutumier bulgare pendant l’époque de la domination ottomane,” *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 1, no. 2 (1934), 34–36, 44.

315 Bobčev, “Bulgaria under Tsar Simeon—II,” 109–110.

the vein of Drinov, did adopt the outward trappings of power and the ornaments of Byzantine civilization, but beneath these were concealed the genuine and unspoiled Slavic social and political organization. For Stanev, Nikov and Bobchev, substantiating the continuity of the fundamental structures of medieval Bulgarian society and their potential to survive and progress was more important than pointing pedagogically at their corrosion—and therefore intrinsic frailty—under the impact of Byzantinism (and, by extension, the “West”).

To complete the range of interpretations, Bogdan Filov (1883–1945), a leading archaeologist, art historian and politician, deployed the arguments about the discontinuity between Hellas and Byzantium for the purpose of “explaining” the division between Eastern and Western Europe.³¹⁶ Filov agreed with the majority of Balkan Byzantinists that in terms of ethnic composition, political representation, military participation and state structure, the Empire’s “Hellenic” character was highly problematic. Regarding culture, it was the strongly Orientalized Hellenistic culture rather than classical Hellenism that impacted Byzantium. Byzantine culture, Filov stressed, was “principally a Christian-Oriental culture,” with the Greek and Roman elements, or what he called “pagan-European” culture, playing a secondary role. The “spirit of Byzantinism” could be better understood if we looked not for what connected it with antiquity and Hellas but for what distinguished it from them. “Because the value of Byzantinism as a cultural and political factor lies much more in what it succeeded in newly creating than in that which it could have preserved from the past.” According to Filov, while modern Western and Central Europe was raised in the traditions of the ancient culture, present-day Eastern (or Orthodox) Europe was the child primarily of Byzantium.

Byzantium and Hellas are not therefore two stages in the development of the same historical process; they are two opposite poles, two different worlds, two contrasts. Byzantium and Hellas are the scions of two different civilizations; they are the embodiment of the eternal conflict between East and West—a conflict that emerged at the dawn of European history and that, in one form or another, continues to this day. This explains the differences between present-day Western and Eastern Europe . . .

The “dualism” in contemporary European culture would disappear and its unification would be accomplished, concluded Filov, “only when in the

316 Bogdan Filov, “Vizantiya i Elada,” *Bălgarska misāl* 2, no. 1 (1927), 32–41; *Bălgarska misāl* 2, no. 2 (1927), 125–135.

all-European civilization enter all lasting values that humankind had created so far during its entire existence.”³¹⁷

...

In the new, “Yugoslav” phase of Serbian historiography before World War II, interest in the medieval past drifted away from close engagement with the Byzantine “component” in the Serbian history and culture, despite certain advances in the proper field of Byzantine studies.³¹⁸ At the center of attention were themes and (re)interpretations underscoring the community between the three constitutive nationalities of the state. Cultural and historical differences between Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were impossible to erase but could be reconfigured. Instead of emphasizing the Serbian medieval state’s oscillation between the Byzantine and the Latin cultural-political spheres and its expanding “Byzantinization,” the Serbian historians of the 1920s and the early 1930s preferred to present it as the site of “reconciliation” and unison of these apparently contradictory orientations. The growing disillusionment with the Yugoslav idea in the 1930s marked a return to a narrower national focus but no revived interest in Byzantine themes. The most significant Serbian historians of the interwar period, Stanoje Stanojević, Vladimir Ćorović, Jovan Radonić and Nikola Radojčić, although trained as Byzantologists, either turned away from Serbian-Byzantine themes towards other medieval topics (Radojčić, Stanojević), switched to more specialized studies (Radonić) or rarely touched upon the Byzantine presence in Serbian history except for purely political aspects (Ćorović). Byzantium and its legacy were not a popular topic in interwar Serbian history-writing. Research in this direction, as we shall see, largely fell upon a non-local, immigrant community of Byzantinist scholars.

One can detect the general mentality underlying these postwar developments in the work of a Serbian geographer with a strong impact on the historical field. Jovan Cvijić (1865–1927) was not only a paramount figure in Serbian geology, geography and anthropogeography but a major state-builder, whose international scholarly reputation lent invaluable support to Serbia’s, and later

317 Filov, “Vizantiya i Elada,” *Bălgarska misāl* 2, no. 2, 130, 133, 135.

318 The work of the first Serbian Byzantologists, the aforementioned Dragutin Anastasijević and Filaret Granić (1883–1948), was acknowledged already at the time as erudite and rigorous but too specialized, and the bulk of it remained accessible to only a narrow circle of specialists. During the whole interwar period only two doctoral dissertations in Byzantine studies were defended at Belgrade University (Maksimović, “Razvoj vizantologije,” 661–663).

Yugoslavia's, political claims.³¹⁹ In several of his works, written in the late 1910s and early 1920s, he dealt with, among other things, the "zones of civilization" and "psychological types" in the Balkans from a historicized anthropological perspective. Byzantine high culture, according to Cvijić, had been completely obliterated by his own time. Certain "remains of the civilization of the middle and lower classes" had survived but "in a changed, almost corrupted form." The "corruption" began in the Middle Ages through the assimilation of elements from Oriental civilization and intensified during the Turkish period, when Levantine influences were added. "Thus modified, Byzantine civilization spread during the Byzantine and Turkish periods over the larger part of the peninsula, and even in regions which are today outside its confines. Byzantine civilization has thus become Balkan civilization par excellence, Balkanism in the true sense of the word."³²⁰ During the period of Ottoman rule, the "material civilization and the moral conceptions that emanated from Byzantium, particularly those of the Byzantine period of decadence, continued to spread throughout almost the entire peninsula." Indeed, the Ottoman Empire ensured the "Byzantinization" of the region on a scale that was unthinkable prior to its inclusion in the Ottoman political realm: "The ancient frontiers which hindered the advance of Byzantine civilization had disappeared, and the means of transmission remained as effective if not more so."

Nonetheless, Cvijić was not inclined to overrate the pervasiveness and the impact of the Byzantine-Ottoman culture. For even in the southern parts of the peninsula, the spread of Byzantine civilization, he held, was interrupted by numerous enclaves of the patriarchal regime—"the opposite [of Byzantine civilization] in a material as well as spiritual sense." The zone of patriarchal culture (whose "core" was formed by Montenegro and the adjacent areas of Herzegovina and northern Albania) presented the authentic Balkan Slav culture; there lived "physically the strongest and ethnographically the most vigorous tribes and peoples in the Balkan peninsula... These are peoples of strength and power... the best species in the Balkan Peninsula [endowed

319 Many of Cvijić's scholarly works vindicated, alternately or in parallel, pro-Serbian or pro-Yugoslav positions. Between 1915 and 1919 he published nine books in French and English, most of them with the support of the Serbian government, which furnished scholarly legitimacy to the territorial claims of the planned Yugoslav state. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, he was one of six senior experts heading the Ethnographic and Historical Section and, as such, was closely involved in both the formal creation of Yugoslavia and the postwar territorial settlement in Southeastern Europe.

320 Jovan Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilization of the Balkan Peninsula," *Geographical Review* 5, no. 6 (1918), 471–472.

with] a healthy, highland morality and a deep sense of community and self-sacrifice." Although various cultural elements were present in this zone, all of them had been fully assimilated without changing the nature of the patriarchal civilization.³²¹ The patriarchal culture had reared the (largely Serbian) Dinaric psychological type that Cvijić credited with the potential to become the dominant regional type. Outside the scope of, and opposite in character to, this expanding core of heroic, state-creative Dinaric Serbs, "untouched by contact with foreign peoples or civilizations," were the Eastern Balkan, strongly Byzantinized and Orientalized Bulgarian *raya*. Remarkably, the "complete antipode in every respect to this patriarchal core" was not, in Cvijić's view, the Western civilizational zone, but the peoples of Byzantine-Tzintzar culture characterized by "petty Byzantine-Tzintzar morality," such as Greeks, Vlachs and Bulgarians. "The most pronounced boundary in this region," Cvijić maintained, "is not the boundary between Byzantine and Western civilization, but that between the patriarchal regime and the Byzantine civilization."³²² The politically loaded ideology behind Cvijić's cultural taxonomy was not necessarily shared by all Serbian historians; still, many adopted, and others drew on or instrumentalized, parts of his argument.

Vladimir Ćorović (1885–1941), the most prolific and high-profile Serbian historian of that time (born in Herzegovina), wrote his *History of Yugoslavia* (1933) in the spirit of Yugoslavism and in defense of "Yugoslavdom." He tried to weave the medieval history of the three recognized nationalities that came to constitute interwar Yugoslavia (also encompassing the "Macedonian Slavs" and "Serbo-Croatian" Bosnia) into a narrative of a single people with different (historically contingent) cultural-political trajectories. Against this ambitious canvas Ćorović seemed uninterested in assessing the relative importance of the Byzantine "model" for the Serbs, despite his minute survey of Serbian-Byzantine political relations. That was also the case in his other synthetic study, *History of the Serbs* (written on the eve of World War II and published posthumously). In his coverage of the "seminal" achievements of medieval Serbia—the emergence of the "state idea" and state tradition, the organization of the church, the creation of religious architecture and art—Byzantine influence was barely mentioned. True, Ćorović tells us (as others did before him) that the state formation among the Serbs came as a reaction to an outside pressure or threat; that on the "Serbian lands" (Zeta and Raška) "Eastern and Western influences intersected"; and that after the tenth century the Serbs' "not only political but also religious-civilizational" orientation towards Constantinople

³²¹ *Balkansko poluostrvo*, vol. 1, 85–86.

³²² Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilization," 481.

and Byzantium definitely prevailed and predominated for the next “several centuries.” However, his narrative does not indicate that either of these was directly effectuated by Byzantium or that “importation” of Byzantine models had much to do with the Serbian state and culture.

Thus Ćorović maintained that the Serbs’ political and cultural reorientation towards Byzantium came about with the “mediation of their kinsmen from Macedonia.” If by the mid-twelfth century Raška “was in the main a purely Orthodox domain,” this was the result of the activity of the “Slavic Macedonian element.”³²³ The influence of the Byzantine model on the formation of the Serbian state and the institutionalization of its autocephalous Orthodox Church remained unaddressed. Stefan Nemnaja is said to have been the first to develop a “state idea” in a land of “strong [particularistic] ambitions and bloody atavism” and created the “condition for a spiritual civilization, which . . . [had] to educate the raw instincts of the still-primitive Serbs.” Yet one is left with the impression that this idea and the notion of civilization were sheer Serbian creations testifying to “the state growth and high cultural aspirations of medieval Serbia.” Similarly, the autocephalous Serbian church set up by Sava Nemanjić in 1219 with the sanction of the Constantinople Patriarchate had a “purely national character”: “Sava made the Orthodox faith the state religion of Serbia and tied it closely with the interests of the state and the people,” said Ćorović; Sava’s church was and remained “popular and national,” “actively, lively and directly concerned with the overall progress of the people,” and this was its “greatest significance.” Therefore, Ćorović concluded, “The Serbian state idea was created physically by Nemanja and intellectually by Sava.”³²⁴ As in the Bulgarian storyline, “Slavic Orthodoxy” is said to have been intended to achieve “the full homogeneity of the Serbian state.” The important difference is that the Bulgarian historians’ assessments of the national role of the clergy were often ambivalent, seeing it as susceptible to “Byzantinization,” that is, cultural de-nationalization and social estrangement from the people. In Serbian historiography, by contrast, the Serbian clergy invariably featured as *the* prime “patriotic element,” a firm repository of the Serbian state idea, national patrimony and love for freedom. Typical of this narration was the complete harmony between church and state.³²⁵

323 Vladimir Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Narodno Delo, 1933), 58–59, 102–103; Vladimir Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda* (originally titled *Istorija Srba*) (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1989), 72–73.

324 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 121, 129–130.

325 *Ibid.*, 331. The (overwhelmingly religious) Serbian art and architecture were likewise presented as essentially Serbian despite some “minor” Romanic or Byzantine elements. See,

All things considered, until the proclamation of Stefan Dušan's empire in the mid-fourteenth century, Byzantium appears in Ćorović's *History* as a formidable adversary to the Serbs, but not as their civilizational model. Even their cultural "export" to Romania was defined as "perpetuation of the Serbian-Bulgarian [not Serbian-Byzantine] civilization."³²⁶ It was only after overtaking Southern Macedonia and entering deep into properly Greek areas that the Serbs were exposed to the influence of Greek culture: "It appears that the Byzantinization of Serbs started in the fourteenth century and first affected the court and higher society."³²⁷ Echoing Cvijić, we may read Serbia's de-Byzantinization by Ćorović as an attempt to underscore the state-building and creative genius of the Serbs (and the Slavs). But it could also indicate an attempt to downplay the importance for the Yugoslav nations of their imperial legacies—Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and Habsburg—which continued to divide rather than unite them.

This being said, we should acknowledge Ćorović's lack of Romantic élan and of a tendency to operate with the collective agency of "the Serbian people." At the same time, Novaković's central critical theses—about the imitative imperialism of the Serbian state class, hence the insignificance of the principle of nationality, and the irrelevance of the historical precedent for the present—were not adopted by either Stanojević or Ćorović. For the period before Stefan Dušan's empire, none of them used the notion of a (Byzantium-inspired) imperialist idea—quite the contrary. Stanoje Stanojević stressed that in the strategic direction of Serbia's expansion—the Vardar River valley and Macedonia—it met with the resistance of both Byzantium, the traditional possessor of this area, and Bulgaria, which claimed it by state right. Against these historical and state rights, he argued,

Serbia opposed the right of life [*životno pravo*] for its state interests and national power. At Velbužd [where the Serbs defeated the Bulgarians in a 1330 battle] a fight was waged between Byzantine-Bulgarian state-legalistic theories and Serbian national and state life. With its enduring forces, Serbia swept to victory, and the question of supremacy in

for example, Ćorović's discussion of church architecture and painting during the reign of King Milutin (*ibid.*, 164–165).

326 *Ibid.*, 317.

327 Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 158.

the Vardar valley and Macedonia was definitively solved in favor of the Serbian people.³²⁸

Ćorović borrowed wholesale this remarkable declaration of the Serbs' right to *Lebensraum* in Macedonia:

Whole new areas were included in the Serbian state which until then had never belonged to it and became, if they had not already been, our national possession in an ethnic sense as well. [...] The battle of Velbužd was one of the most absolute Serbian victories in the Middle Ages. . . . Bulgaria was reduced to its natural borders from the Danube to the Rila Mountains and Maritsa River and never again dared to go beyond them at the expense of the Serbs to the west . . . Serbian domination in northern Macedonia was thus fully secured by this victory, while in the south the field was prepared for Dušan's further work.³²⁹

For both Stanojević and Ćorović, the Bulgarian claims to Macedonia were more important than the traditional opposition to Byzantium precisely because of their "relevance" for the contemporary Serbian-Bulgarian controversies over this region. Nothing remained of the ethnic indistinguishability between the medieval Serbs and Bulgarians and of the worthlessness of the historical right on which Novaković had repeatedly insisted.

Since it constituted the height of Serbian medieval power and, accordingly, a key turning point in the national historiography, the empire of Stefan Dušan encapsulated the different interpretations of the nature and long-term consequences of the Serbian interaction with Byzantium. Tellingly, while Stanoje Stanojević ceased the work he had begun at the beginning of the century on *Byzantium and the Serbs*, he wrote a study dedicated to *Car Dušan* (1922). Stanojević was not inclined to overrate Dušan's strength or the Serbs' potential to master a successor empire. He attributed Dušan's "easy victories" to the weakness of and lack of serious resistance from Byzantium ("a shadow of the once strong state"). According to him, Dušan had no preconceived plan to create a Serbian-Byzantine empire: his political concept had taken shape gradually, "under the influence of the development of events and under the influence of his successes." "The easy successes, vanity and state interests impalpably dragged him ever further," Stanojević added, "and he was increasingly losing

328 Stanoje Stanojević, *Car Dušan* (Belgrade: Izdavačka Knjižara Napredak, 1922), 6, 7.

329 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 165, 171–172; Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 144.

the feeling that he was leaving the real base under his feet and was leading the state towards an uncertain future.”³³⁰ Dušan’s solution to the “hard question of how the Serbian kingdom could take the place of Byzantium”—the creation of a “Serbian-Byzantine state”—was the result of his awareness that Serbia was “still too weak” and that military victory was not enough. His idea of a Serbian-Byzantine empire to replace and succeed Byzantium meant that “in the territories once ruled by Byzantium, Byzantine culture and Byzantine state arrangement would [continue to] dominate” but that “all military, administrative and ecclesiastical executives and dignitaries would be taken from the areas that constituted the core of the original Serbian state.” The choice of Skopje for the site of his coronation as “Emperor of the Serbs and the Greeks” was another demonstration of his intention “that in the new empire the Serbian element would be the bearer of the entire state life.”³³¹ This “great plan and heavy task” ultimately failed because, according to Stanojević, it lacked the necessary preconditions and abilities. The biggest problem was the great differences between the northern (“Serbian”) and the southern (“Greek”) provinces of the Serbian-Byzantine state, which “were the consequence of different races, a different past and culture and different cultural influences.” Stanojević blamed this internal chasm on more than just a shortage of time to level the differences. Like Mutafchiev in regard to the Bulgarians, he seemed to believe that neither the Serbian state nor the Serbian people had the forces needed for it. Logically, the state built on such “crumbling foundations” disintegrated after Dušan’s death, leaving the Serbian people with “only the memory of an episode of glory and power, which later, especially during the [Ottoman] yoke, influenced through tradition the national education and the strengthening of the moral forces of the nation.”³³²

For his part, Vladimir Ćorović assumed that Dušan had come naturally to the idea “to replace enfeebled and worn-out Byzantium with the fresh empire of his own people.” Having conquered most of the Balkans, Dušan believed that the imperial title belonged to him by right and that the state he had created was not a competitor to but “almost a master of the Eastern Roman Empire.”³³³ While Ćorović agreed that the Serbian-Byzantine empire was a “hybrid creation,” he still considered it a “national [project] in the true sense

330 Stanojević, *Car Dušan*, 12–13, 24.

331 Ibid., 13–18.

332 Ibid., 23–25. Stanojević argued that in combining realism and wishful thinking, “crude actions and sentimental-romantic outbursts,” Dušan was “a true son of his people” (ibid., 24).

333 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 179–180; Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 167.

of the word, having made the Serbs the main pivot of the state." Moreover, according to him Dušan had invested considerable effort into trying to make a unified whole out of the disparate parts of his empire, his "Legal Code" being the best proof. However, during this period the Serbian upper classes (Ćorović makes no mention of the popular masses) came under the strong impact of the incorporated Greek population, of its culture and customs, while the royal court, the church architecture and art replicated the "Greek forms." Up to that point, Serbia, despite being an Orthodox state, had felt "the strong influence of the West." However, from the time of Dušan, due to the establishment of direct connections to the "Greeks" and the deeper penetration into Byzantine areas, "Serbia was increasingly acquiring a Balkan-Byzantine character." Like Stanojević, Ćorović found that the biggest problem was not that Dušan's policy was becoming "too imperialistic." The problem was, first, that his state and Serbian culture in general were "lacking sufficient skills, traditions and time to introduce their spirit into the new lands," that is, "to assimilate, nurture and really adopt them." Second, and more critically, while Serbian strength was being worn out far in the south, "the Serbian element in the west was being progressively suppressed" by the Germans and the Magyars.³³⁴

Both Stanojević and Ćorović thus blamed Dušan for the same thing the Bulgarian historians blamed Simeon for: that is, for seeking to create not a big national state, but "another" Byzantine Empire, and for thus succumbing to, rather than assimilating, the "Greek forms." The fact that through his legislative work he sought to establish a "legal monarchy" different from the Byzantine autocratic model—a "rule of law" of sorts—was commendable but fruitless. Yet in the end, Ćorović's balance sheet favored the Serbs at the expense of the Byzantines (and the Bulgarians). On the one hand, "from the fourteenth century," he maintained, "the Morava was a purely Serbian river and the Serbian ethnic boundary extended to the Timok River; to the south, Macedonia acquired a Serbian character." Unsurprisingly, these historical borders overlapped perfectly with Yugoslavia's postwar political geography to the east and south, that is, in the one-time Byzantine and later Dušan's realm. On the other hand, the Serbs are said to have been the only ones who resisted and fought the advancing Turks instead of "bowing down" like the Greeks and the Bulgarians.³³⁵ The complete disappearance from this narrative of Byzantium as a factor in Balkan politics, starting with Dušan's imperial coronation, is indeed striking. Somehow Serbia appears as having taken the place of Byzantium, first as a prime force on the Balkan peninsula and then as a

334 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 173–174, 179–182, 193; Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 167–170.

335 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 238–239.

major barrier against the Turkish advance. Ćorović quite unambiguously suggested that the role of defenders of Christianity, imperial dignity and freedom fell to the Serbs. In any event, he added, “Serbian corpses, numbering in the thousands, filled the defense trenches of Europe to safeguard it from Turkish invasion.”³³⁶

The actual implications of the theories of the interwar Yugoslav historians about Serbia and Byzantium become apparent when we look at the way other contemporary intellectuals instrumentalized them. The well-known philosopher and foremost “national psychologist” in interwar Yugoslavia, Vladimir Dvorniković (1888–1956), came up with an interpretation whose meta-historical characteristics were comparable to Mutaščiev’s. According to him, Stefan Nemanja’s sons, Stefan the First-Crowned and Sava, realized “an ingenious division” not only of political roles but of civilizational spheres, the first taking his crown from the West, the second taking the church from the East.

With his autocephalous church St. Sava became the founder of Serbian nationalism and of the continuity of the Serbian state idea. With Sava, Serbdom stepped onto the historical scene as a conscious subject and bearer of its proper national and state idea. The coalescence of church and state, on the Byzantine model, became the main organizational principle and a guarantee of state continuity.

The importance of their “mighty state-building and organizational work” was that, while until then Serbia had continuously oscillated between the Greek-Byzantine and Western-Latin political and cultural spheres, “Stefan and Sava’s action, in an apparent inner contradiction, brought about the fortunate reconciliation of these spheres through a formula that provided an orientation line for centuries [ahead], which is: material-technological adherence to the West and spiritual-cultural [adherence] to the East.”³³⁷

The state the Nemanjićs had created “at the intersection of East and West,” Dvorniković argued, was at base “a Byzantinoid state”—neither a bureaucratic, Roman-law-based Byzantine state nor a feudal one in the Western sense, but something outside these categories. It drew on the “*županian* atavism” that counteracted the “Byzantine-Oriental theocratic principle” but at the same time was acquiescent to strong leadership. The Nemanjićs, he wrote, were led by the desire to “erase the Greek name” from the territory of the Serbian state—which indicated “that there was, although not in the present-

336 Ibid., 239, 291.

337 Vladimir Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1939), 852–853.

day sense, something nationally conscious and opposed to the Greek spirit in the souls of all the strong state-building Nemanjićs—except Dušan.” With the latter, imperialism entered Serbian medieval history: “instead of bringing the idea of the ‘unifier’ of the Serbian lands, [Stefan] Nemanja, to completion, Dušan tied to the state framework new Greeks and Albanians.” The essence of the proclamation of the Serbian-Byzantine empire, according to Dvorniković, was “in the continuity of the Eastern-Christian idea, whose bearer was the Byzantine *basileus*, and the Romaic state nation. The Nemanjićs . . . began to feel they were carriers of and fighters for the Christian, Orthodox-religious idea.” In its internal organization this empire was a “*mixtum compositum* of ancient remnants and new reformist beginnings.” However, “this legal-Byzantine and Western-feudal state arrangement did not fit the Serbian people. After its healthy beginnings Nemanjićs’s Serbia degraded into an artificial Serbian-Greek symbiosis”; as such it was doomed to fail.³³⁸ Here we can detect close similarities with Mutaľchiev’s portrayal of the “organic” pagan phase of Bulgarian medieval history and the “inorganic” one following the infiltration of Byzantinism.

The most dynamic presence in the historians’ guild of interwar Belgrade, however, was a Russian émigré community. In 1933 George Ostrogorsky (Georgiy Ostrogorski, 1902–1976), a promising young Byzantologist at the time and one of the leading figures in the discipline after World War II, settled down in Belgrade, where he spent the next forty-odd years researching Byzantine history and the cultural limits of *Slavia Orthodoxa*.³³⁹ The Byzantinist school that he created there and which was institutionalized in 1948 with the setting up of the Byzantine Institute played a major role not only in the formation of a whole new generation of Serbian Byzantologists but in promulgating new approaches and thematic fields to the study of the Slavs’ medieval past and culture.³⁴⁰

338 Ibid., 853–856.

339 G. Ostrogorsky was born in St. Petersburg but fled in 1917. Before arriving in Belgrade at the invitation of Stanoje Stanojević, he had studied in Heidelberg and Paris and taught at the University of Breslau (today Wrocław, Poland). In Belgrade he worked in, and in 1940 became the chair of, the Seminar for Byzantine Studies. In 1948 he founded and became director of the Byzantine Institute in Belgrade. Other émigré members of this school were Vladimir Mošin (1894–1987), Teodor Taranovski (1875–1936) and Aleksandar Soloviev (1890–1970).

340 Ostrogorsky’s research covered a wide range of topics related to the social, political and cultural history of Byzantium and its relations with the Slavic world (see Maksimović, “Razvoj vizantologije,” 667, for a list of topics and quoted bibliographies). The actual crys-

It has been rightly noted that Ostrogorsky did not regard the history of Byzantium as the story only of the Greek speakers. Nor did he consider the history of the Balkan Slavs to be merely a chronicle of resistance to Greek hegemony. For him Slavic society and culture were more than just products of the Byzantine political and cultural model. While Serbian historians before him (such as J. Radonić and S. Stanojević) did not go further than postulating the ability of the Serbs to, in the words of Stanojević, “fully assimilate and adapt [Byzantine culture] to itself and its own properties and needs, adding to it that which it had created itself until then,”³⁴¹ Ostrogorsky essentially reversed the perspective and sought to cast light on the Slavs’ contribution to Byzantine society and culture. The preface to the first edition of his *Hauptwerk* reads: “This book sets out to trace the development of the Byzantine state and to show how this was determined by the interaction of changing internal and external forces. . . . [A]n attempt is made to bring out the essential interdependence of events at home and abroad, political, ecclesiastical and cultural.”³⁴² Ostrogorsky considered the Slavs to be a, if not *the*, principal external force that shaped the Byzantine state.³⁴³

In an extensive review of Vasil Zlatarski’s *History of the Bulgarian State in the Middle Ages* (vols. 1 and 2, 1927, 1934), Ostrogorsky also commented on his and Mutaſchiev’s thesis about the ominous Byzantine influence on Bulgaria and their negative assessment of Simeon’s rule for basing itself fully on the Byzantine idea and opening the door to Byzantine influence:

It seems to me [Ostrogorsky wrote] that this policy, like the similar policy of Dušan later, cannot be contemplated from the point of view of modern national ideas. In the Middle Ages the aspiration for hegemony expressed itself in the aspiration for empire, whereas as an actual empire it was considered only the Roman Empire, tied to Rome or to the New Rome—Constantinople.³⁴⁴

tallization of the “Belgrade Byzantinist school,” however, took place only after the setting up of the Institute and especially starting in the 1960s.

341 Stanojević, *Istorija srpskoga naroda*, 157.

342 Georgy Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980) (originally published as *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, Munich, 1940), vii. This book, published in more than ten languages and numerous editions, enjoyed a lasting international reputation.

343 Paul Stephenson, “The Byzantine Frontier in Macedonia,” in *Dialogos: Hellenic Studies Review* 7 (2001), 33.

344 [Review of V.N. Zlatarski, *Istoriya na Bălgarskata Dărzhava prez srednite vekove*], *Jugoslovenski Istoriski Časopis* 1, nos. 3–4 (1935), 515.

Stojan Novaković would have fully agreed with this observation.

It is no exaggeration to say that the scholarly interest in Byzantium and Serbian- (or Slavic-) Byzantine relations in interwar Yugoslavia was largely the territory of the Russian émigré circle. Most of its members delved into specific sub-fields, most conspicuously legal history, as is testified by the work of two prominent legal scholars, Teodor Taranovski (1875–1936) and Aleksandar Soloviev (1890–1971), which focused on the “exegesis” of Dušan’s Code. Taranovski was not inclined to read the Code as a reflection of a highly developed Serbian society, as post-Romantic Serbian historiography tended to do. For him the provisions placing the rule of law above the tsar was an expression of Dušan’s imperial legal ideology, with roots in Byzantine law, rather than an expression of legal practice.³⁴⁵ Soloviev contradicted Bobchev in arguing that the Slavs did not bring with them a developed system of customary law and that they put together their juridical codices quite late (at the end of the thirteenth century) in the form of a “mixed system of Byzantine-Slavic law.” Until then Byzantine law had been fully adopted by the Bulgarians as “sacred, perfect, complete and civilized,” with the penal code presenting the only instance of “serious divergences and contradictions between the Slav and the Byzantine points of view.” According to Soloviev it was unwarranted to assume that the Bulgarian tsars had governed and judged according to the customary law, especially after the Byzantine domination in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He credited Dušan’s state for having engendered “an original Serbian code . . . based on the best principles of the Roman-Byzantine law” which, at the same time, harmonized with the Slav character and social organization. The *Corpus Juris* of the “composite Serbo-Greek Empire” that Dušan had initiated sought “to create a great state, based on the force of the Serbian race and on the Roman-Byzantine tradition, a legal state, in which the conqueror and the conquered would be equal [and] in which everyone, including the emperor himself, had to respect the principles of the objective law.”³⁴⁶ Unlike Taranovski, Soloviev made no distinction between ideology and practice and

345 Teodor Taranovski, *Istorija srpskog prava u Nemanjičkoj državi*, vols. 1–4 (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1931–1935); Teodor Taranovski, *Dušanov zakonik i Dušanovo carstvo* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1926).

346 Alexandre Soloviev, “Aperçu historique du développement du droit dans les Balkans (jusqu’au xv^e siècle),” *Revue Internationale des Etudes Balkaniques* 1–2, nos. 3–4 (1936), 437–445. See also Aleksandar Soloviev, *Značaj vizantijskog prava na Balkanu* (Belgrade: Izdanje Čupićeve zadužbine, 1928); Aleksandar Soloviev, *Zakonodavstvo Stefana Dušana, cara Srba i Grka* (Skopje: Skopsko naučno društvo, 1928); Aleksandar Soloviev, *Značaj vizantijskog prava na Balkanu* (Belgrade: Izdanje Čupićeve zadužbine, 1928).

lent his authority to the thesis upheld by the “critical” Serbian historiography about the “high juridical consciousness” transpiring from Dušan’s Code. For his part, Vladimir Mošin (1894–1987), another prominent Byzantinist and Slavacist in this circle, contested the widely held view that Byzantine influence peaked at the time of Dušan’s conquests in the south. This peak, according to Mošin, was only the “logical conclusion of the previous development of the Serbian political history” associated with King Milutin’s reign and the first conquests of Byzantine areas (the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries).³⁴⁷ Mošin thus dated the process of massive “Byzantinization” of Serbian political life half a century earlier—an adjustment that would thereafter be accepted as authoritative.

...

Romania emerged as the great geopolitical victor of World War I in the region. The peace treaties of 1918 fulfilled almost all the dreams of the prewar irredentists of uniting the ethnic Romanians and the territories where they lived into a unitary Greater Romania. Romanian nationalism’s success was perceived as confirmation of, and further boosted the *élan* for, Romania’s historical “mission” as a regional (and even global) power and civilizer. This very triumph, on the other hand, brought to the surface unanticipated problems regarding the unification of populations and territories that had belonged to various empires (Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian), encompassed substantial ethnic minorities and embodied different historical, cultural and institutional traditions. The ensuing efforts at national integration of Greater Romania enhanced the presence of ethnic nationalism in politics and culture and were in turn underpinned by the megalomaniac, “post-imperial” visions of many Romanian intellectuals.

In Romanian historiography, in contrast to Bulgarian and Serbian historiography, the fall of Byzantium in 1453 marked not an end but a new beginning: the rise of a fresh Orthodox power, the Romanian principalities—the real heir of Byzantium.³⁴⁸ As before the war, Nicolae Iorga largely set the frame and the terms of the debates on the Romanian past in a wider—regional and global—

347 Vladimir Mošin, “Vizantiski uticaj u Srbiji u XIV veku,” *Jugoslovenski istoriski casopis* 3, nos. 1–4 (1937), 147–160 (italics original).

348 The Ottomans conquered Wallachia in 1462 and Moldavia in 1513. However, neither province fully lost its independence. The two provinces paid an annual tribute to the Sublime Porte, and their princes (elected by the boyars) were formally approved by it, but otherwise the Porte did not interfere in their internal affairs, except in extreme cases.

context. The convening of the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest in 1924 and the founding of the Romanian Institute of Byzantine Studies in 1934 were also his initiatives.

For Iorga the Byzantine Empire was “an international formula, consecrated by imperial legitimacy and propped by Roman law and the Eastern Christian Church.”³⁴⁹ The dominance of the Greek language and the prestige of the Hellenic heritage did not mean the dominance of Greek culture, least of all the national character of the state:

Greek scholars usually make a mistake as bad as the one that considers the Byzantine Empire a “Bas-Empire.” By connecting classical Greece, a completely different world, to Byzantium, which was of Roman descent in both its origins and principles, they attribute to what should only be considered as a stage in their national development an exclusively national, unchangeable, nature that, despite instincts natural to most races, did not exist at all. [...] Byzantium excluded, until the end, everything related to nationality.³⁵⁰

As in the case of Zlatarski or Mutařchiev, however, the soundness of such pronouncements was not replicated in discussions dedicated to the contemporaneous “vast ‘Romanian country,’ ‘Romanian Fatherland,’ a term imbued with a deep ethnic instinct.”³⁵¹ Iorga also tirelessly highlighted “the role that the Romanians played in the East, not as a bellicose element [like the Bulgarians and the Serbs], but in the higher terms of civilization, of ideas and above all *of conservation of the ancient ideals of unity and ancient links with the other world, the West.*”³⁵² This perennial role of the Romanians was amplified after the fall of Constantinople.

Iorga’s most celebrated contribution to the field of Byzantine studies, which reached its fully developed form in the 1930s, was his idea of “Byzantium’s continuity” after the Empire’s political demise in 1453. His felicitous formula “Byzantium after Byzantium” provided a new perspective on the institutional

349 Iorga, *Formes byzantines et réalités balkaniques*, 34–35.

350 Nicolae Iorga, *La place des Romains dans l’histoire universelle*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Edition de l’Institut d’études byzantines, 1935), 18–19; Nicolae Iorga, “Byzance en Occident,” in Nicolae Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 329.

351 Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de leur Civilisation* (Paris: Henry Paulin, 1920), 49.

352 Nicolae Iorga, “Deux traditions historiques dans les Balkans: celle de l’Italie et celle de Roumains,” *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique* 1 (1912–1913), 170 (italics original).

and cultural landscape of not only the Balkans but the entire Near East. The longevity he had in mind concerned the institutions, the political system, the religious formation and the type of civilization that it had created and which, far from being immutable, kept on evolving and assimilating new forms of civilization. Byzantium, wrote Iorga,

namely that which formed, beyond outward appearances, its essence not only maintained itself... but continued its millenary action... through which this political and cultural unity, always evolving, was accumulating on its own, appearing to remain the same, all that entered its wide area of action... Many new things would come to light, but deep down the unyielding Byzantine continuity would remain.³⁵³

Even if it encompassed a vast area, stretching from Italy to Georgia and Syria, “the essence of Byzantine life” was preserved mainly in the Balkans. And although the Ottoman Empire and the Patriarchate of Constantinople took over many of its functions, the actual successors, spiritual and institutional, of Byzantium were the Romanians:

For five hundred years we gave asylum to the whole higher religious life, to the whole cultural life of the peoples from across the Danube. Greek Byzantium and Slav Byzantium, which derived from it, thus lived for another half-millennium among us and through us, if not for us... There was a time when the entire Byzantine Balkan legacy seemed destined to pass on to our princes...³⁵⁴

The process of creating this “new Romanian Byzantium”³⁵⁵ went through stages. The first stage coincided with the Ottoman expansion, when Byzantine notables took refuge in the Principalities and infiltrated the nascent Romanian elite. Thus, from the fourteenth century, the Romanian provinces came to represent “the Byzantine and Slavo-Byzantine political civilization in the entirety of its diverse elements,” while the Romanian princes assumed the role of “legitimate heirs of the Eastern Caesars.” The second phase began with the Ottoman

353 Nicolae Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium* (Iași, Oxford and Portland: Centre for Romanian Studies, 2000) (first published as *Byzance après Byzance. Continuation de l'Histoire de la vie byzantine* [Bucharest: Edition de l'Institut d'études byzantines, 1935]), 25–26.

354 Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des Etats balkaniques à l'époque moderne* (Bucharest: C. Sfetea, 1914), 11.

355 Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 166.

conquest first of the independent Balkan states and then of Constantinople. During this period the cultural life of all of Southeastern Europe was concentrated in the Romanian lands, "which was to last for centuries and to bestow on the Romanians the role of guardians of the Christian unity in a world subjected in a political sense to Islam and in civilizational sense to Hellenism... *That which was still preserved of the Slavo-Byzantine religious life now passed into the Romanian countries, and there alone.*" The third phase was the time when Hellenism, revived by the new commerce and the opportunities offered by global interactions, found in the Romanian Principalities what it was lacking in Constantinople: "security, a Christian milieu superior in civilization and wealth, supreme honors and, finally and especially, the illusion of that Empire which had perished in Byzantium, but which the scholars of the [Romanian] nation hoped to bring back." It was the time when the Romanians, in the person of their princes, "appeared before all Eastern Christians as the guardians of the tradition of the one-time Byzantine emperors."³⁵⁶ The arrival of the Phanariots caused no break since they assumed "the task of continuing Byzantine traditions within the confines of the territory under the authority of the sultan"; they had come to Romania "not as Greeks tending to Hellenize, but as successors of universal civilization of the Greek language" who "endeavored to attract any Orthodox believers to their Byzantine Hellenism."³⁵⁷ Thus, thanks to the Romanians, Byzantinism survived until "the dawn of the nineteenth century," when it was stripped of its essence by the new ideas of philosophy, "the enemy of the religious influences and of historical authorities," and by national consciousness. "Post-Byzantine" Byzantium died only in 1821, when "the Hellenic Phoenix of the Heteria killed, in its daring enthusiasm, the Byzantine eagle."³⁵⁸

In Iorga's reading, therefore, Romania was the real *Byzance après Byzance*, having fulfilled a universal mission and safeguarded the distinctive post-Byzantine civilization of Southeastern Europe. What the Bulgarians and the Serbs had long fought for in vain, the Romanians received by right, since deep

356 Iorga, *Histoire des Etats balkaniques*, 46–50; 52–58 (italics original); Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 129–154, 166, 200. See also Olga Cicance, "Conceptia lui Nicolae Iorga despre 'Byzance après Byzance,'" in *Nicolae Iorga—istoric al Bizanțului*, ed. Eugen Stănescu (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1971), 219–228; Virgil Căndea, "Nicolas Iorga, historien de l'Europe du Sud-Est," in *Nicolas Iorga. L'homme et l'oeuvre*, ed. D.M. Pippidi (Bucharest: Éditions de l'Académie de la R.S.R., 1972), 193.

357 Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 205, 213.

358 *Ibid.*, 231–234; Iorga, *I. Les bases nécessaires d'une nouvelle histoire du moyen-âge. II. La survivance byzantine dans les pays roumains* (Bucharest: Ed. du Ministère de l'instruction publique; Paris: Librairie H. Champion, 1913), 47–48.

down they had never relinquished the Roman idea of empire and their Roman “awareness”:

If this Byzantium could come close to us, thus causing our deviation from the old popular life and from the Western life . . . if Byzantium could reign among us, this was neither because of its Greek character nor because of our special devotion to Orthodoxy . . . but because, due to the Roman inception preserved in the instinct of our popular classes, we recognized its Roman basis.³⁵⁹

Ultimately, therefore, it was the synthesis between Byzantium and Rome, between the “traditional monarchic order” of the East and the “creative spontaneity” of the West, grafted on the imperial predilections and democratic organization of the popular masses that shaped the unique character of Romanian civilization. And it was this synthesis that secured the Romanians’ place in world history.³⁶⁰

Most postwar Romanian medievalists and Byzantinists were students of either Iorga or Russo. Nicolae Bănescu (1878–1971), a student and lifelong aficionado of Iorga, was another leading figure of Romanian medieval studies. Bănescu led the Chair of Byzantine History at the University of Cluj (1919–1938) and later succeeded D. Russo at the University of Bucharest (1938–1947) and Iorga as director of the Institute of Byzantine Studies. Unlike Iorga, Bănescu was not a visionary tempted by grand generalizations and syntheses. He began his academic career as a Byzantine philologist in the rigorous school of August Heisenberg in Munich. Later, he moved to the history of the military-administrative organization of the Lower Danube lands, engaging in fierce debates with Bulgarian opponents over the issue of the political status and “ethnic” character of Southern Dobrudja in the Middle Ages.³⁶¹ Taking for granted Iorga’s assertions that the first Romanian “crystallizations of state” took place in the eleventh century in the Lower Danube, Bănescu set out to identify the political and administrative conditions promoting such crystallizations which, according to him, replicated the Byzantine model. Tatos, Sesthlay and

359 Nicolae Iorga, *Ce e Bizanțul* (Bucharest: Institutul de studii bizantine, 1939), 21–22.

360 Iorga’s aspiration to integrate Romanian history into world history was crowned by his monumental *La place des Roumains dans l’histoire universelle* (3 vols., 1935–1936). See also Iorga, “Relations entre l’Orient et l’Occident,” in Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 161–163. Against this backdrop, it is barely surprising that Iorga completely ignored Russia as another contender for the Byzantine legacy.

361 See Roumen Daskalov’s chapter in this volume.

Satzas, the three rulers presiding over this process—argued Bănescu, based on very shaky evidence—were Romanians until then integrated in the provincial life of the Byzantine *thema* of Parastrion, who, by rebelling against Byzantium, had made plain their desire for political independence. At the roots of the medieval Romanian state, Bănescu implied, was an uninterrupted political tradition built on the imperial pattern of Byzantium. While the Old Rome left its indelible mark on the formation of the Romanian identity, the New Rome made a key contribution to the maintenance of this national identity by directly supplying it with a civilizational model.³⁶² Bănescu's many years of research on the Byzantine *reconquista* of the north Balkan lands in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, on the Byzantine domination of the Lower Danube and the northeastern coast of the Black Sea, and his sustained effort to prove that the Bulgarian state never effectively reigned over the "Romanian-inhabited" lands north of the Danube (despite the evident "Slavization" of medieval Romanian society), pointed in the same direction.³⁶³ Asserting Byzantium's presence in these lands was vital for his project of proving Iorga's state-building hypothesis right.

A rather different picture of the factors leading to the Romanians' political maturation and of Byzantium's role thereof emerges from the writings of George Murnu (1868–1957), a highly reputed classical philologist, who dealt extensively with the history of the Balkan Vlachs (Aromanians). Analyzing *The First Appearance of the Romanians in History* (1913), as his study about the earliest mention of the Vlachs in a late tenth-century Byzantine chronicle was entitled, Murnu concluded that the relative social and political autonomy the Vlachs enjoyed in the Byzantine Empire was a legacy of their political status in the First Bulgarian Kingdom and thus had a pre-Byzantine origin. The same thesis was already present in his major work, *Kekaumenos and the*

362 Nicolae Bănescu, "Cele mai vechi știri byzantine asupra românilor de la Dunărea de Jos," *Anuarul Institutului de istorie națională din Cluj* 1 (1921–1922), 138–160, quoted in Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Balkanologi și bizantiniști români* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Pro, 2002), 102–103. Tanașoca prudently adds that the available evidence does not make it possible to define the ethnic and political character of these formations, also given that the populations living there were extremely mixed. He points out that the political maturation of the Romanians, as demonstrated by their desire for autonomy, came about later, at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, obviously implying the "Vlach-Bulgarian Tsardom" (*ibid.*).

363 See Tanașoca, *Balkanologi și bizantiniști*, 115–116 (notes 40, 43, 47–50). Other leading Romanian historians, like A. Xenopol, D. Onciul and P.P. Panaitescu, insisted that the lands north of the Danube had been politically incorporated in the Bulgarian state under Khan Krum in the ninth century.

Romanians in the Eleventh Century (1905), discussing the history of the Balkan Aromanians in their relations with the Byzantines. In the interwar period, this thesis would develop into a general theory of Romanian-Bulgarian solidarity against Byzantium.³⁶⁴ The Byzantine chronicler Kekaumenos's disparaging attitude toward the Vlachs was interpreted by Murnu as an expression of the Byzantine imperialist mentality. This mentality, resting on political, ideological and sometimes also economic foundations, was marked by deep-seated animosity to "other nationalities" (Bulgarians, Armenians, Jews and Western peoples), frequently described as "barbarians," and their aspirations to independence. The "barbarians" in turn had reacted with a comparable hostility against Byzantine imperialism. Adopting the vocabulary of ethnic psychology, Murnu spoke of "racial aversions" and "deep racial instincts" that had added to the politically and economically motivated antagonism between the Byzantine Greeks and the other Balkan nations.³⁶⁵ The "dictatorial and centralist tendency of the detestable Byzantine autocracy" had engendered a long-standing anti-Byzantine tradition, based above all on the "close solidarity" of ethnic and political interests between the Bulgarians and the Vlachs culminating with the Second Bulgarian ("Vlach-Bulgarian") Kingdom. The Bulgarian tsars of both the First and the Second Kingdom had a vital interest in forming "a single political and military structure" with the Vlachs because they had recognized the Balkan Romanians' numerical power and military valor ("a vigorous, free and freedom-loving mountaineer population" that held the equilibrium between Bulgaria and Byzantium) and, unlike the Byzantines, were ready to reward them with self-government and respect for their "infallible instinct for ethnic preservation." Not only had the Vlachs participated in all the uprisings against Byzantine oppression, but the "Vlach-Bulgarian" Kingdom itself had been, according to Murnu, "the exclusive deed of Romanian will, intelligence and energy." The cases of the Vlachs' "solidarity" with Byzantium against the Bulgarians were offhandedly dismissed. They were impractical for Murnu's strategy of "smuggling in" the Vlachs as the Empire's major and ethnically assertive opponent in the Balkans once the Bulgarians lost their "indigenous vigor" in the late tenth century. There is no reason to downplay the actual stakes of such a strategy: as Murnu put it, that was the occasion when "the Romanian people for the first time manifested

364 Murnu's contributions to the history of the Balkan Vlachs were collected in the volume *Studii istorice privitoare la trecutul românilor de peste Dunăre*, ed. Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1984).

365 Tanașoca, *Balkanologi și bizantiniști*, 41.

itself in the most brilliant manner in the light of universal history,” signaling the beginning of “the fulfillment of its mission by the definitive founding of the purely Romanian states on the other side of the Danube.”³⁶⁶

Here is a characteristic Aromanian portrayal of Byzantium and its role in the destiny of the Romanians. In it one can easily detect the points of divergence from the mainstream Romanian narrative, stressing the beneficial impact of the Empire’s presence in the Lower Danube. One can also find the affinities with the Bulgarian interpretation, focusing on Byzantium’s “de-nationalizing” oppression and imperialism. The reasons for both are found in the evolution, since the early twentieth century, of the “Aromanian question,” which Murnu and other scholars of Aromanian descent perceived in ways very similar to those advocated by their Bulgarian peers a few decades earlier. They aspired to cultural autonomy—that is, national schools and a national church—for the Aromanians as a shield against their denationalization and contestation of identity, mainly by the Greeks.³⁶⁷ Similar conditions and attitudes, however, could lead to rather different conclusions. Moreover, once the major Aromanian grievances were satisfied, the attitude toward the “Greeks” became more nuanced. In a lecture dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Greek independence in 1931, Murnu took care to distinguish between two mentalities, “two contradictory *psyche*”—that of the Byzantine “race,” of the ethnically heterogeneous, oppressive, bureaucratic, sterile, in a word reactionary political class of the Empire, and the authentic, liberal, vigorous and creative, and therefore progressive, Greek people. The latter had suffered no less than the Romanians and the Bulgarians under the yoke of this Asiatic-tinged Byzantinism, whose later embodiment, even more impure because it served an inferior culture—the Ottoman—was the Phanariots.³⁶⁸

The younger generation of historians, grouped around *Revista istorică română* (C.C. Giurescu, V. Papacostea, Gh.I. Brătianu, P.P. Panaitescu), sought to infuse a new spirit in Romanian historiography by reforming it into a more

366 George Murnu, “Les roumains de la Bulgarie médiéval,” *Balcania* 1 (1938), 1–21.

367 Murnu himself was actively involved in the lobbying for the Aromanians’ cultural and political rights, both as a member of the Society for Macedono-Romanian Culture and a delegate, on behalf of this society, to the London Peace Conference in 1913 and the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 (Tanașoca, *Balcanologi și bizantinști*, 31–32). For a contemporary Greek challenge to the idea of the Aromanians’ Roman(ian) origin and their kinship with the Romanians, see Keramopulos, “Que sont les Koutzovalaques? Un problème ethnologique,” *Le Messager d’Athènes*, nos. 5193–5200 (1939).

368 George Murnu, “Românii și grecii,” *Revista macedoromână* 3, nos. 1–2 (1931), 3–9 (see also Tanașoca, *Balcanologi și bizantinști*, 53–55).

rigorously “scientific” and “objective” field, detached from politics and emotion. But as in contemporary Greece, Bulgaria or Yugoslavia, this did not necessarily imply subverting the historical canon: all in all, Iorga’s construction of Romanian history survived undamaged, despite strident critiques by “new historians” about his “metahistorical” method.

Not all national historians of this generation, however, were enthralled by Byzantium and its “Romanian” continuation. For Constantin C. Giurescu (1901–1977), as for Xenopol and Ioan Bogdan before him and Petre P. Panaitescu in his own day, the role of Byzantium in Romanian history was derivative of or else mediated by that of the Slavs. The latter, Giurescu maintained, had influenced the Romanians more strongly than any other population “in terms of *race, of language, of social and state organization, in cultural and ecclesiastical terms*”; indeed, by being precisely a “Romanic people of Slavic coloratura,” the Romanians represented “a distinct, characteristic nuance and a possibility for *unique* civilization and culture among the large Romanic family.”³⁶⁹ Unlike Murnu or Bănescu, Giurescu was also disinclined to overrate the demographic or political significance of the Vlachs in the Second “Vlach-Bulgarian” Kingdom, emphasizing its rapid transformation into an “exclusively Bulgarian state.”³⁷⁰ The first reliable evidence about the existence of Romanian states, he pointed out, dated from the second half of the thirteenth century,³⁷¹ a time dominated by the invasions of the Tartars and the Turks. Byzantium and Romanian-Byzantine relations at that time are barely considered. Even more significantly perhaps, Giurescu made only fleeting references to the Byzantine legacy when discussing the organization and the culture of the medieval Romanian states, except for the religious architecture and art. Furthermore, he was generally careful not to make sharp distinctions between the direct Byzantine influences and those exercised via the Bulgarian or the Serbian courts.³⁷² All this does not mean that Giurescu’s historical discourse was anti-nationalist: he was no less a national prophet than Iorga, whom he

369 Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor* (5 vols., 1935–1946), vol. 1: *Din cele mai vechi timpuri pînă la moartea lui Alexandru cel Bun (1432)* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației pentru Literatură și Artă, 1946; first ed. 1935), 246 (italics in the original). Giurescu stressed that the influences he had in mind concerned “the most ancient Slavic legacy” from the fifth to the seventh centuries, preceding the cultural influences after the establishment of the Romanian states in the fourteenth century (*ibid.*, 267).

370 *Ibid.*, 333.

371 Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor, din cele mai vechi timpuri până la moartea regelui Ferdinand I* (Bucharest: Editura Cugetarea-Georgescu Delafras, 1943), 148.

372 *Ibid.*, 242–263. Giurescu mentions only in passing that by his style of government, Prince Vasile Lupu “could be considered a veritable successor of the Byzantine emperors” (*ibid.*,

severely criticized on mythological grounds but whose championship of Romanians' protochronism, autochthonism and uninterrupted continuity he shared completely.³⁷³

Petre P. Panaitescu (1900–1967), perhaps his generation's most outstanding historian of Romanian culture, came up with a far more straightforward, "realist" and essentially sociological interpretation of the origins and value of what he called the "Slavo-Byzantine" culture of medieval Romania. This culture was not purely Byzantine, which was essential for its adoption by the Romanians, but a form of "popular Byzantinism" filtered through the social and cultural conditions of the Slavs. In this form it dominated Romanian society all the way from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. Its Byzantine origin showed in the Eastern Orthodox faith, a religion of the anonymous masses with a tradition in humility and fraternity; in the predominance of classicism in art and of the concrete over the abstract and intellectualism; in the centralized state as distinct from the Western knightly feudalism; and in the ancient Greek and Roman tradition in literature that was interrupted in the West. This Byzantine culture, however, was created for an empire, for the New Rome, while the Slavs were primarily villagers, with patriarchal and agricultural monarchies, whose potential for assimilating a culture was limited. From the vast Byzantine culture, Panaitescu argued, the Slavs had adopted what they could understand and assimilate in accordance with the level and structure of their society—that is, only its popular forms: "the Slavic culture is a Byzantine culture for the people," or, since it had an ecclesiastical bent, as the Byzantine original did, "we can characterize it as a religious culture of Eastern-Byzantine origin adapted to an agricultural-patriarchal people. Such was the nature of that culture, in which only the outer garment was Slavic [and] which the Romanians adopted and maintained for nine centuries."³⁷⁴

Panaitescu set out to expose the flawed reasoning of all those Romanian historians (and they were the majority) who saw the period of the domination of "Byzantine and Orthodox Slavonism" as a huge historical misfortune—first, for severing the links between the Romanians and the "superior culture of the West," keeping them in an inferior position to the other

330, 333). See also Giurescu, *Istoria românilor*, vol. 1, 438, 497; vol. 2: *De la Mircea cel Bătrân și Alexandru cel Bun până la Mihai Viteazul*, 354–355, 367, 382–386.

373 See also Daskalov and Marinov in this volume.

374 Petre P. Panaitescu, " 'Periada slavonă.' La români și ruperea de cultura Apusului" (1944), republished in Petre P. Panaitescu, *Contribuții la istoria culturii românești* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1971), 37–41.

Romanic peoples and preventing any progress; and second, for severely disrupting the course of development and the cultural destiny of the Romanians as a Latin people. If the Romanians had adopted Byzantine culture in its Slavic form, and not the Western one, Panaitescu affirmed, it was because it accorded with the social, economic and spiritual conditions of the Romanians that prevailed between the ninth and the eighteenth centuries, unlike Western culture, whose technical and urban character was alien to them. Slavo-Byzantine culture “was thus a necessity” rather than “a misfortune or disgrace” of history. “Slavonism (that is, popular Byzantinism),” Panaitescu concluded, “was not the cause for our rupture with the West, but the result of this rupture, produced by the contrast in the economic and social life.” Nor was it lacking, according to him, in significant services to the Romanian people: this culture had stirred the social and moral solidarity of the Romanians, the unity of their three historical provinces and their ability to unite to resist foreign invasions, dominance and denationalization. The Slavo-Byzantine culture and the identity it conferred on the Romanians “ensured the cohesion and consolidation of the people during the hardest times of the past.” The centuries of its domination, Panaitescu contended, needed to be fully rehabilitated as “a glorious period in our history . . . rich in moral values”; for “a culture that is adapting to the spiritual needs of the whole people, in a certain stage of its evolution, is a spiritual good that the inheritors have to respect.”³⁷⁵ Panaitescu’s reading of the Slavo-Byzantine “factor” in Romanian history thus differed fundamentally from more than just the prevailing post-Enlightenment one as authoritatively enunciated by Xenopol. His rehabilitation of the Slavo-Byzantine period in Romanian history submitted to a logic that differed considerably from that of Russo or even Iorga in that it built on an organic sociological understanding of the relationship between culture and society. Of particular interest to our topic is his inference, clearly at odds with Iorga’s, that Byzantinism never reached Romania in a pure and direct form and that its “Slavicization” was precisely what made it adequate and efficient in the Romanian context.³⁷⁶

375 Ibid., 34–37, 41–50. According to Panaitescu, Slavo-Byzantine culture was displaced by a new, French-oriented cultural phase only when this became natural from a social point of view, that is, when society itself entered a new phase of development.

376 Panaitescu directly challenged Iorga’s thesis, stating, “The Greek culture did not penetrate the Romanian lands due to the survival of the Byzantine ideas [as Iorga claimed in *Byzance après Byzance*] but due to the predominance of the rich Greeks in the cities of the Ottoman Empire”; neither the direct religious ties initially, nor the fall of Constantinople, which actually failed to produce a big wave of Greek emigrants to Romania, laid the basis for Greek influence on Romanian culture, since both Byzantine theology and the Byzantine legal system were introduced through their Slavic iterations

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The 1930s saw the rise of a parallel, “supra-national” paradigm of interpreting Byzantium and the Byzantine legacy, which its practitioners dubbed “the new science of Balkanology.” This epistemological approach came to underwrite and reinforce a geopolitical one: in the face of rising international insecurity and a mounting sense of small-state defenselessness during those years, regional solidarity was increasingly seen as an indispensable option; its pinnacle was the conclusion of the Balkan Pact in 1934. Geopolitics and historiography converged again, this time on behalf of an anti-hegemonistic regional agenda.

The founders of the Belgrade-based Balkan Institute, the Croat Petar Skok (1881–1956) and the Serb Milan Budimir (1891–1975), defined the task of the new science as elucidating regional commonalities and orienting national academic research “towards the study of a Balkan organism that had constituted one whole since the most distant times.”³⁷⁷ In this they were led by the conviction that only an inter-Balkan perspective could properly shed light on major historical processes that, when placed in a strictly national framework, remained incomprehensible. This credo had already been enunciated by Nicolae Iorga, who was the first to speak of a “fundamental unity resting on archaic traditions,” a “particular [culture] common to all of Southeastern Europe,” and a particular historical, ethnographic and civilizational “synthesis” between all Balkan peoples. This specificity, Iorga argued while simultaneously weaving his nationalist project, drew upon the great Thraco-Illyrian-Roman tradition and was epitomized by Byzantium, which later passed it on to the Ottoman Empire. This specificity constituted the heritage that all the Balkan peoples shared.³⁷⁸

Following in Iorga’s footsteps, Budimir and Skok contended that two historical tendencies—unification and particularism—had crystallized into “a unique law of the Balkans” guiding its overall history. A major force of “Balkan aggregation” (next to the Macedonian dynasty, the Romans, and the Ottoman

(Petre P. Panaitescu, “Cultura feodală,” in *ibid.*, 84–85). In other, more specific studies, Panaitescu reiterated this understanding of the issue.

377 Milan Budimir and Petar Skok, “But et signification des études balkaniques,” *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 1, no. 1 (1934), 2–3.

378 Nicolae Iorga, *Le caractère commun des institutions du Sud-Est de l’Europe* (Paris: J. Gamber, 1929); Nicolae Iorga, “Éléments de communauté entre les peuples du Sud-Est Européen,” *Revue Historique du Sud-est européen* 12 (1935), nos. 4–6; Nicolae Iorga, *Ce este Sud-Estul european* (Bucharest: Datina Românească, 1940).

Empire) was the Byzantine Empire: it had “maintained the Roman cohesion of the Balkans while fighting against the Balkan particularisms that had emerged after the establishment of the Slavs in the peninsula.” Byzantium, the Yugoslav scholars maintained, far from continuing the particularistic life of the ancient Greek cities, represented “the Christian continuation of the Roman Empire”—it was a Christian, not a national, empire. The modern Greeks had as much right to claim direct Byzantine origin as the different Romance peoples had with respect to the ancient Romans: “under Byzantine and Turkish domination they had absorbed different Balkan elements.” Hence it fell to Balkanology, not national science, to “disentangle the constitutive elements in the formation of modern Greece.” Tellingly, the particularisms of the Slavs, once they had become aware of their force, are said to have succumbed to the same “law of Balkan aggregation”: the two Bulgarian kingdoms and that of Stefan Dušan sought to impose their own unification of the region while upholding its ethnic diversity. This was a crucial point in Balkanological reasoning: unlike “Pax Romana,” with its “uniform unity,” Budimir and Skok argued, the Balkans of both the Byzantine and the Ottoman eras “tended towards unity in variations, a diverse unity,” in implicit contrast to the situation in the West. This was beneficial since “varied commonality is more efficient and more durable than uniform unity, since organized variety has, properly speaking, more ‘biological’ value than unity without variations.”³⁷⁹ The Yugoslav Balkanologists thus tried to reconcile the ethnic plurality of the region, and hence the centrality of the national principle, with the idea of regional “interconnectedness” and “commonality,” where Byzantium and its legacy were assigned a key role.

The Romanian medievalist Victor Papacostea (1900–1962), another ardent champion of the transnational approach to the past of this part of Europe, further bolstered the prominence of Byzantium as the single most important unifying factor of the Balkan world. On the level of military and political history, he wrote, its very existence spurred “more than once a great grouping of Balkan interests.” Even when its social cohesion was weakened, thus opening the way for the emergence of various “nationalities,” the latter did not act in isolation but formed “veritable ‘Balkan leagues’ ” of “Serbo-Albano-Bulgarian-Vlach” complexion. It was a great mistake for historians to see the Bulgarian or Serbian empires as national states in the modern sense of the word. On the contrary, the heads of these “associations” were haunted by the idea of a universal empire, which Byzantium embodied, and their initiatives had an “inter-

379 Budimir and Skok, “But et signification des études balkaniques,” 4, 10–11; Milan Budimir and Petar Skok, “Destinée balkaniques,” *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 2 (1936), no. 4, 602–604, 607.

Balkan character" (even the Greeks in places like Salonica had often joined the revolts instigated by the Bulgarians against the imperial power of Byzantium). Inspired by the Byzantine model and seeking to replace Byzantium, the Slavic empires acted as unifying forces by "Balkanizing" Byzantinism. On the level of culture, administration, political, ecclesiastical and juridical organization, the Empire had demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt to local and ethnic particularities, safeguarding the proper traditions and customs of the invaders and, above all, transforming the national languages into instruments of culture. In all of this it often took on the appearance of a "grouping of Balkan interests": the political and cultural model of Byzantium was creatively reworked by all Balkan peoples, thus ensuring their uniformity and stimulating their originality.³⁸⁰

The authority of foreign Byzantinology was also brought to bear in this supra-national re-conceptualization of the Byzantine factor in the history of the Balkans. The aforementioned Russian émigré scholar, Vladimir Mošin, undertook to highlight the great contributions of Russian Byzantine studies to the development of "the new scientific discipline: inter-Balkan studies." To him the achievements of the founders of Russian Byzantinology—Visilievskiy, Uspenkiy and Kondakov—supplied a solid base for "the systematic studies of inter-Balkan relations," especially as regards social, cultural and art history. Their studies "provided a strong impulse for the development of autonomous Balkan sciences," attesting to the "civilizing emanation of Byzantium." According to Mošin, by throwing light on "the huge heritage left behind by Byzantium, on which the civilization of the Balkan peoples thrives," the study of Slavic-Byzantine relations was making ever more plain "the community of [the Balkan peoples'] spiritual interests" and the imminence of "big synthetic constructions."³⁸¹ Franz Dölger (1891–1968), a leading German Byzantinist and the editor-in-chief of *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* from 1931 to 1963, likewise spoke of an "exceptionally close cultural community of the Balkan peoples," "resting mainly on the fundament of the Byzantine processes of development."³⁸²

This last metamorphosis of Byzantium, which aimed to underwrite, in the words of Papacostea, a regional "synthesis drawing on the elements of Balkan

380 Victor Papacostea, "La Péninsule Balkanique et le problème des études comparées," *Balkanica* 6 (1943), iii–xxi. See also Tanaşoca, *Balcanologi şi bizantinisti*, 174–188.

381 Vladimir Mošin, "Les études byzantines et les problèmes de l'histoire interbalkanique," *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 1, no. 1 (1934), 314–319.

382 Franz Dölger, "Die mittelalterliche Kultur auf dem Balkan (die Periode von der Gründung der unabhängigen Staaten bis zur Türkenherrschaft)," *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 1, no. 2 (1935), 108–124.

interdependence and unity,” remained marginal in the prewar Balkan historiographies. But it laid down the methodological premises and served as the basis for institutionalizing Balkan studies as a discrete field of research, one that would exert a certain pressure on the national framework of history-writing after the war. The story of how this field came to conceptualize the Balkans as a historical region—a process in which interpretations of Byzantium and its legacy continued to occupy an important place—is a topic we will examine in the last volume of this book series.

Conclusion

The diversity of interpretations and instrumentalizations of Byzantium surveyed above had emerged as a result of various and changing, and at the same time closely entwined, political-ideological and epistemological orientations. Exigencies of cultural politics, ethno-history and the continued role of the Orthodox Church combined with contemporary political issues of identity, geopolitics and relations with neighboring states to affect the ways in which Byzantium was appropriated, studied and re-presented in the four countries. A significant exception was the “national historians” who deemed the medieval past irrelevant for the modern nation-building or irredentist projects. As a rule, warring expansionist agendas interlaced with intellectual currents and historical (re-)interpretations, and an imperial mystique (or “memory” or “legacy”) of Byzantium (the “Second Rome”), came to underpin actualized programs for political expansion.

The interpretations oscillated between (identifications with) the prestige or the stigma of Byzantium, between fighting against and emulating it, between appropriation of and dissociation from its legacy. Different readings often coexisted and competed with each other as parallel scenarios, and some underwent dramatic changes over time. Certain narratives became privileged by the national canons of history, and they demonstrate the markedly different ways in which the four historiographic traditions accommodated the “Byzantine factor” in their histories. Greek historiography devoured the Empire and its cultural heritage wholesale, turning it into an integral part of national continuity. For the Bulgarians Byzantium featured as the main adversary in confrontation with whom the Bulgarian national state and identity had crystallized and were sustained. The Serbian historians tended to stress the role of the medieval empire of Stefan Dušan as the actual heir and improved version of the Eastern Roman Empire. Romania, the latecomer on the Balkan

political scene, never relinquished its claims to represent the Latin West in the Byzantine East, and its historiography conceived of Byzantium mainly as a cultural and institutional legacy that had survived, thanks to the Romanians, long after its political extinction.

The clash between political rivalry with and cultural appropriation of Byzantium was a typical one, but the real stakes of the debate lie beneath this general observation—in the nuances of the interpretation. Different sensitivities became grafted onto the hegemonic national narratives of ethnic continuity, Golden Age and cultural agency vis-à-vis Byzantium, which often came to buttress diametrically opposed political values. What faces us, therefore, is a range of “competing Byzantinisms” where identification with or dissociation from Byzantium was a function of the needs felt by the modern Balkan nations.

These mutually warring national images were formed in constant dialogue and reciprocity with each other. A common element in the Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian interpretations was their opposition to the “national imperialism” of the Greeks which disregarded their “historical rights” and denied them a share in the making of the Empire. (It should also be noted that, from among the Balkan “heirs” of Byzantium, Greece was the only one whose national program envisaged the “re”-conquering of Constantinople and the resurgence of the Byzantine Empire.) Even when portraying Byzantium as the prime adversary, all contested the Greeks’ claim that it belonged to them alone. The competition between Greeks and Slavs, Bulgarians and Romanians (or Vlachs) over ethnic predominance and imperial “contribution” was a recurring one, which stoked the flames of historiographic conflict. Throughout the whole period studied here, the Bulgarian interpretations most closely mirrored the Greek ones—the Bulgarians’ perception of Byzantium as their political and cultural Other was largely shaped and recycled as a counter-story to the Greeks’ self-identification with the Empire. The Romanian narratives often “kidnapped” the Bulgarian ones, counter-ethnicizing and assimilating them as an integral part of the Romanian continuity on both sides of the Danube. The Serbian scenarios drew on both the Bulgarian and the Greek narrations by featuring medieval Serbia as both a major rival of Byzantium and the superior—fresh and vibrant—recipient of its legacy.

But there was also another layer of formative interaction: that with the Western and Russian perceptions of Byzantium, which were themselves controversial (treating Byzantium as both part of European civilization and its cultural opposite). Western Philhellenic thought was decisive for the original estrangement of the Greeks from their Byzantine past. So were later Western Romanticism for the discovery of the Greek “continuity” and the Russian and German Byzantinistics for the Bulgarian and Serbian “Byzantine” perceptions.

In the process, certain “borrowed” conceptions and interpretations were reconfigured to serve specific national needs. The Latinist school in Romania adopted the Western Enlightenment notion of Byzantium in order to advance the Romanians’ claim of being the only rightful heirs of the Roman imperial tradition and divest Byzantium of such a role, while the Greeks’ appropriation of Byzantium came to serve both as an act of emancipation from the Western canon of history and an attempt at its subversion. From around the turn of the century and especially during the interwar period, the (institutionalized) study of Byzantium in the Balkan countries began to exert an increasing reverse impact on Western and Russian Byzantine scholarship.

Significantly, much of the actual confrontation between the Balkan historical narrations fed on a set of shared assumptions revolving around key common *topoi*, such as “historical right,” uninterrupted ethnic continuity (occasionally autochthony), national cohesion and integration (or unity), resilience, and the vigor and creativity of the nation in “assimilating” allogeneic influences. The perseverance of these *topoi* testifies to and is the product of the *longue durée* of the national-Romantic canon in all four historiographies. Mainstream history-writing, as featured by the positivist (scientific and professional) historiographical schools or the interwar metahistorical narratives, was steeped in it—arguably an outcome of the protracted process of nation-state building in the region. The Balkan historians shared the conviction that embracing “objective” or “conjectural” history did not mean writing “non-nationalist” history. This logically led them to suppositions drawing on the same ideological concepts but underwriting the fragmentation of history into national chunks and the primeval supremacy of the nation as the agent of history. In this sense, the non-national empire would inevitably be set in opposition to the national state. The positive attitude to Byzantium was reserved for those of its achievements or effects that could be nationalized or made to serve the cause of the nation (the conversion to Christianity being one eloquent example among many). The only remarkable exception was the supra-national post-imperial agenda of the budding “science” of Balkanology, but its theoretical and programmatic acumen was barely matched by actual historical research. The dominant national readings continued to undercut the idea that a common imperial legacy could provide a basis for a common regional history. Ironically, the Universal Empire and its ecumenical legacy ended up buttressing discrete national identities and projects.

Some present-day authors maintain that “it is highly doubtful that anything like a ‘Middle Ages’ existed at all in south-eastern Europe... [T]he heritage of Byzantium, the leading political formation of the region, left a memory that was very difficult to incorporate into any kind of ‘national’

patrimony.”³⁸³ As our survey has demonstrated, the actual situation is far more complex. Rather than outright rejection we are faced with a multifaceted process of negotiating the place of Byzantium in the individual historiographical traditions. These negotiations were premised on the inherent ambiguity of the empire’s role in devising the “national patrimony” and involved interpretations originating with different generations of historians (and their networks), varying cultural-political contexts and epistemological perspectives shaped in constant dialogue and competition.

383 Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis, “To Whom Does Byzantium Belong? Greeks, Turks and the Present in the Medieval Balkans,” in *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States*, eds. R.J.W. Evans and Guy P. Marchal (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011), 149.

Feud over the Middle Ages: Bulgarian-Romanian Historiographical Debates

Roumen Daskalov

At first, the Vlachs were reluctant and turned away from the revolt urged upon them by Peter and Asan, looking askance at the magnitude of the undertaking. To overcome the timidity of their compatriots, the brothers built a house of prayer in the name of the Good Martyr Demetrios. In it they gathered many demoniacs of both races; with crossed and bloodshot eyes, hair disheveled, and with precisely all the other symptoms demonstrated by those possessed by demons, they were instructed to say in their ravings that the God of the race of the Bulgars and Vlachs had consented to their freedom and assented that they should shake off after so long a time the yoke from their neck; and in support of this cause, Demetrios, the Martyr for Christ, would abandon the metropolis of Thessaloniki and his church there and the customary haunts of the Romans and come over to them to be their helper and assistant in their forthcoming task.

They [Asan and the barbarians around him] were not content merely to preserve their own possessions and to assume control of the government of Mysia; they also were compelled to wreak havoc against the Roman territories and unite the political power of Mysia and Bulgaria into one empire as of old.

One of the captive priests, who had been carried off to the Haimos as a prisoner of war and knew the language of the Vlachs, begged Asan to release him and appealed to him to show him mercy. Asan, throwing his head back in denial, refused and said that it had never been his policy to set Romans free but to kill them; for this was also God's will, and he had let him live a long time.

NICETAS (OR NIKETAS) CHONIATES, *Historia*¹

¹ *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 205, 206, 257.

This chapter deals with the controversy between Bulgarian and Romanian historians on the medieval history of the two peoples. The debate has a prehistory. The first known person to write about a medieval past shared by Bulgarians and Romanians alike was the philologist from the Transylvanian (Latinist) school Gheorge Șincai (1754–1816) in his 1811 history book. In search of traces of the Romanians after the withdrawal of the Romans (claimed as ancestors by the Latinist school), he wrote that they were united with the Bulgars after the latter's arrival in the Balkans and fought the "Greeks" (Byzantium) under the Bulgars' name. The First Bulgarian Kingdom (founded in 680 or 681) was thus "Bulgarian-Romanian." With King Samuil or Samuel (reigned 997–1014), whom Șincai claimed was Romanian, "kingship passed from the Bulgarians to the Romanians." The Second Bulgarian Empire, founded after the revolt of the Vlachs Peter (in Bulgarian: Petăr; in Romanian: Petru) and Asen (in the sources and in Romanian: Asan) south of the Danube and which reached its peak under the rule of their brother Ioannitsa (Bulgarian: Kaloyan, Romanian: Ioniță), was already the "Romanian-Bulgarian empire."² The Transylvanian historian and politician August Treboniu Laurian (1810–1881) followed in Șincai's steps in referring to the First Bulgarian Kingdom as "Bulgarian-Romanian" and to the second as "Romanian-Bulgarian." So did the Moldavian-born Romanian statesman and historian Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817–1891) in claiming the "kingdom of the Transdanubian Vlachs" (that is, the Second Bulgarian Kingdom) survived until 1393, when it was destroyed by the Turks.³ For a time the Romanian claims remained unnoticed by the Bulgarians, who were suppressed under Ottoman rule.

The beginnings of the controversy can be traced to an 1867 article in the newspaper *Românul* concerning plans for coordinated action against the Ottoman Empire under Romanian leadership. The article made reference to the union between Bulgarians and Romanians in the Middle Ages under the dynasty of Peter and Asen, which, the writer claimed, was Romanian. The claim was countered by a nationally-minded Bulgarian author (probably Angelaki

2 Gheorge Șincai, *Hronica românilor și a mai multor neamuri*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1967, first published in 1811), 282–283, 289. Quoted in Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 114–115. More on the tenets of the Latinist Transylvanian school appears in Diana Mishkova's chapter in the present volume.

3 Boia, *History and Myth*, 115. Laurian also claimed that many Roman and Byzantine emperors were Romanians from the Balkans.

Savitch) in the Transylvanian newspaper *Trompette*.⁴ The debate came to the fore with the elaboration of the positivist (“scientific”) national historiographies and intensified in the interwar period. It was expressed in a most concentrated and intense form by Petăr Mutaſchiev, the Bulgarian Byzantinist and historian of the medieval Bulgarian kingdoms, who reacted vehemently against what he saw as appropriation of much of the medieval Bulgarian past by the eminent Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga. Iorga’s disciples Petre P. Panaitescu and Nicolae Bănescu countered Mutaſchiev’s attack. Mutaſchiev then responded. Other historians engaged in the debate on the Bulgarian side (most notably Vasil Zlatarski and Ivan Duychev) and on the Romanian side (George Murnu and Gheorghe I. Brătianu). After a conciliatory “internationalist” phase of communism, the debate was reinvigorated in the national-communist era, and echoes of it could be heard afterward as well.

To cite the Bulgarian medievalist Ivan Bozhilov (himself a participant in the debate):

It is no secret to the specialists that a whole book can be written in which to consider in detail the main hypotheses, but such a work would hardly be of any use. Something else is not a secret as well—that the major controversy that many scholars squandered their efforts on is: were Bulgarians or Vlachs the first Asenevtsi [that is, the founders of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom—Asenevtsi in Bulgarian, or Assenids or Asanides, the latter preferred by Romanian authors]?⁵

I take the opposite view, that it is very instructive to study this issue and the Bulgarian-Romanian controversy on the Middle Ages in general, though not primarily to find “the truth,” but for other, no less legitimate scholarly interests and purposes. I will approach the debate with the following objectives. First, I attempt to sort out the main points of contention (where necessary, with a general mention of the sources) with special interest in the basic arguments and interpretations and the rhetorical moves and strategies of the historiographical battles. Second, I examine its non-empirical, overtly political motivation and its effects on scholarship. Third, I probe into the deeper assumptions of

4 Both articles were noted, and the article in *Românul* was translated by the French consul in Bucharest and sent to the French minister of foreign affairs. See Dimităr Kosev, “Dărzhavnata traditsiya v istoriyata na bălgarskiya narod,” in *Bălgariya 1300. Institutsii i dărzhavna traditsiya*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Bălgarsko istoricheskoto družestvo, 1981), 9–23, esp. 11–12.

5 Ivan Bozhilov, *Familiyata Asenevtsi (1184–1460). Genealogiya i prosopografiya* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BAN, “Marin Drinov,” 1994, first published in 1985), 11–12.

the whole endeavor that “condition” the rival positions and guide the interpretation of the meager and often ambiguous sources. Throughout all of this I will contextualize the debate in its changing historical circumstances. Finally, I will reflect upon the uses of history that transpire through the controversy. In short, I will go into the substance of the debate, the strategies in conducting it, its political conditioning, the underlying assumptions, and the concomitant uses of the past. Given that Bulgarians’ and Romanians’ past is partly shared and “entangled,” this will provide an insight into the ways it was, and continues to be, divided and appropriated by the respective national(-ist) historiographies.

What I do not intend to do is to reproduce the dispute by taking a stand and arguing for or against any of the positions taken and engage in the debate myself. Yet the thorny question of “historical truth” can hardly be avoided. As I am not a medievalist myself, I can only make my own judgment by comparing the arguments of the erudite participants and endorse one view or another more or less explicitly. However, this is not my primary goal and in any case would be of little interest. More importantly, I would like to work out some implications from this debate for the question of “historical truth.”

The following exposition is divided into three parts. I first trace the controversy with its main points of contention as elaborated by its main participants, starting at its peak with Nicolae Iorga and Petăr Mutafchiev and moving to the others who joined it. This part is subdivided into sections to mark the progression and ramifications of the debate. More analytical sections are inserted at appropriate points. Afterward, the views of foreign (that is, non-Bulgarian and non-Romanian) scholars are marshaled, as partisan national historians often cited them to corroborate and reinforce their own views. Finally, I draw my own conclusions from the debate.

Mutafchiev’s Clash with Iorga

Of the two scholars, Iorga (born in Botoșani in 1871; died 1940) was the older and by far better known internationally.⁶ Besides being a renowned historian, he was a politician for most of his life (serving as member of parliament, president of the Deputies’ Assembly and of the Senate, cabinet minister

6 Among the numerous works about Iorga, see *Nicolas Iorga. L’homme et l’oeuvre*, ed. D.M. Pippidi (Académie de la République socialiste de Roumanie. Monographies, x) (Bucharest: Éditions de l’Académie de la République socialiste de Roumanie, 1972). See also John Campbell, “Nicholas Iorga,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 26, no. 66 (November 1947), 44–59. See also Wikipedia’s long article on Iorga.

and briefly as prime minister in 1931–1932), as well as a literary critic, poet and playwright. Iorga obtained his baccalaureate from the National College of Iași. Abroad, he earned doctorates from École Pratique des Hautes Études and, in 1893, from Leipzig University (where he was supported by Karl Lamprecht). Upon his return to Romania, he was appointed adjunct professor to the Medieval History Chair at the University of Bucharest in 1894 at the age of twenty-three and became a full professor there in 1895. He also held academic positions at the University of Paris (where he became an aggregate professor in 1924) and other academic institutions. Moreover, he founded the International Congress of Byzantine Studies and the Institute for Southeast European Studies in Bucharest. Initially a Marxist, he became a right-of-center politician—a conservative (for a time a maverick disciple of the Junimea movement), populist-agrarian (leader of the ethno-nationalist agrarian current around the literary magazine *Sămănătorul* [Sower]) and above all a staunch nationalist, and an opponent of the dominant National Liberal Party. His public activities included campaigns to defend ethnic Romanians in Austria-Hungary and Romanian culture in the face of perceived threats; at the same time he was anti-Semitic (and was in a longstanding association with the far-right ideologue A.C. Cuza). Yet he opposed the fascist Iron Guard, sided with its rival, King Carol II, and became active in his corporatist and authoritarian party. He was indirectly involved in the murder of the fascist leader Corneliu Codreanu and was killed in revenge by the Guardists during their brief dictatorship in 1940. A “child prodigy,” polymath and polyglot (speaking twelve foreign languages, though no Slavic ones), with an astounding memory, Iorga produced an enormous body of scholarly writings (some 1300 volumes and pamphlets) with vivid imagination and many valuable insights, yet with inevitable compromises in scholarly quality and style. Abroad, his associates and sympathizers included the German linguist Gustav Weigand and the British historian Robert W. Seton-Watson. At home, his self-confidence and quick temper earned him both admirers and bitter opponents. In the 1930s a new generation of professional historians challenged his status, most notably Constantin G. Giurescu, Petre P. Panaitescu and Gheorghe Brătianu, who found him too politicized, speculative and didactic. Under communism Iorga initially fell into disfavor, and some of his works were banned. Yet with the revival of nationalism in the early 1960s, he was rehabilitated and selectively integrated by the nationalist “protochronist” school to return to fame after the fall of communism (yet not unchallenged by critical historians). Besides his numerous contributions to Romanian national history, Iorga is known as a Byzantinist and Ottomanist scholar and for his *Byzance après Byzance* thesis, that is, of a continuity between the Byzantine imperial

tradition and the Ottoman Empire, but also of commonalities among the Orthodox peoples in it, which is still of relevance.⁷

Petăr Mutafchiev (1883–1943) was born in Bozhentsi near Tărnovo (Bulgaria's medieval capital) and finished classical *gymnasium* (high school) in Ruse/Rousse (on the Danube). He graduated in history and geography from Sofia University (1906–1910) under the formative influence of Vasil Zlatarski—the foremost Bulgarian academic historian of Bulgarian medieval (and Byzantine) history. He began work as curator of the medieval department of the Archeological Museum in Sofia but was soon conscripted and taken away from scholarly work for a whole decade. He participated in the two Balkan wars and in World War I (on the Dobrudja front), earning a reputation as a brave and valiant officer. From 1920 to 1922 he specialized in Byzantine studies at the University of Munich in the seminar of August Heisenberg (who inherited the chair from the renowned Byzantinist Karl Krumbacher) and befriended Franz Dölger (who would become a well-known Byzantinist). He was elected regular *Dozent* (associate professor) in the Chair of History of Byzantium and Eastern Europe at Sofia University in 1923, adjunct professor in 1927 and tenured professor since 1938. Mutafchiev began with publications in Byzantine history, but his scholarly interests shifted toward Bulgarian medieval history in the Byzantine cultural sphere. He was a master of detailed monographs but also excelled in “synthetic” historical studies addressed to a wider audience. He is unique in Bulgarian historical scholarship for his interest in the great issues and patterns of historical development, a search for the deeper meaning of events and a synthetic mode of thinking—a “philosophy of history” (in his own understanding), and not least, for his accomplished style of writing.⁸ Best known is his view of the “harmful influence of Byzantium” (shortened to “Byzantinism”) upon Bulgarian history. Though Mutafchiev was never a politician, he engaged in public debates on national causes (particularly over Dobrudja) and exerted a strong intellectual influence on his contemporaries. Early communist scholars branded him a chauvinist, but he was partially rehabilitated in the late socialist era and returned triumphantly after 1989.

7 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 165.

8 See especially Ivan Duychev, “Profesor Petăr Mutafchiev. Zhivotopisen ocherk,” in Petăr Mutafchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya narod*, chast 1 [part 1], ed. Ivan Duychev (Sofia: Hemus, 1943), xi–xxiii. See also the insightful memoirs of his daughter, the well-known Ottomanist historian Vera Mutafchieva: *Semeyna saga. Razgadavayki bashta si* (Sofia: Balkan Publishing Company, 2000), 111–295.

In 1927 Mutafchiev attacked Iorga's views (which he had been developing for some time) in a book entitled *Bulgarians and Romanians in the History of the Danubian Lands*.⁹ Mutafchiev primarily targeted Iorga's *Formes byzantines et réalités balcaniques* (1922), containing six lectures delivered in the Sorbonne and a number of other works.¹⁰ I will omit some of the points Mutafchiev raised (such as his critique of Iorga's ideas on Byzantium and on the history of the Serbs and Magyars) and concentrate on those that bear directly upon the history of the Romanians and the Bulgarians.

The first set of points concerns the history of the Lower Danube before the arrival of the Slavs and the Turkic Bulgars, meaning before the sixth and seventh centuries. Iorga maintained that the Romanians were descendents of the Dacians (Thracians), Romanized after the conquest of Dacia by the Roman emperor Trajan in the wars of 101–106 CE, during its subsequent colonization. This interpretation (unlike that of the Transylvanian Latinist school) allowed for some (but a minor) Slavic component in the Romanian ethnogenesis. He was an adherent of the continuity theory, the idea that the Romanians have lived in their present lands (especially Banat and Wallachia, but also Transylvania) ever since Roman times, and not in the limited form according to which they receded to the Carpathian Mountains during the centuries of barbarian invasions and descended to the plains of Wallachia and Moldavia only in the early thirteenth century. In his view the Romanized element (which would become Romanian) also prevailed in the province of Moesia south of the Danube in the final centuries of the Roman era and was actually defended by the Byzantine Empire later on. According to him the “Romanians” (i.e., the old Romanized population) south of the Danube were dispersed throughout almost the whole Balkan peninsula (from the Adriatic to the Black Sea and

9 Petăr Mutafchiev, *Bălgari i rumāni v istoriyata na dunavskite zemi* (= *Godishnik na Sofiyskiya universitet. Istoriko-filologicheski fakultet*, kniga 23 [book 23], 1, Sofia: “Hudozhnik,” 1927). It was translated into French: *Bulgares et roumains dans l'histoire des pays danubiens* (Sofia, 1928). This book received a positive review from the well-known Bulgarian philologist Lyubomir Miletich: “Retsenziya, Petăr Mutafchiev, Bălgari i rumāni v istoriyata na dunavskite zemi,” *Makedonski pregled* 3, no. 4 (1927), 103–110. Another Bulgarian scholar who objected to Iorga's ideas was the philologist Stefan Mladenov, “Rumānsko-bălgarskite kulturni otnosheniya v minaloto i rumānskite ucheni,” in *Silistra i Dobrudzha. Nauchno kulturni izsledvaniya*, kniga 1 [book 1] (Sofia, 1927), 59–100, esp. 80–100. This critique is similar to Mutafchiev's but more schematic, and the resentment over Dobrudja is strong. Another Romanian scholar Mladenov vehemently criticizes is the Iași University philologist I. Barbulescu (mainly for his support of Serbian claims to Macedonia).

10 Nicolae Iorga, *Formes byzantines et réalités balcaniques. Leçons faites à la Sorbonne* (Bucharest and Paris, 1922). The other writings will be introduced below.

from the Carpathians to the Rhodopes and the Aegean in the south) for most of the Middle Ages.¹¹

Moreover, Iorga claimed the pre-Romanians were in some way organized. He speaks of a kind of "demotic Romania" (*Romania populaire*) that remained in place even when the Roman/early Byzantine Empire retreated from these lands. This Danubian Romania engendered a series of "local autonomies, sometimes on a strictly national basis." The lands between the Danube and Haemus (the Balkan range) in particular, i.e. the provinces of (Lower) Moesia and adjacent Little Scythia (present-day Dobrudja), formed a region "absolutely autonomous if we discount the homage to the emperor, invoked mostly in theory." The (absolute or relative) autonomy was arguably based on autonomous towns on the right bank of the Danube with their own militias, protector saints, bishops and notables, entrusted with the defense of the Danube.¹² Iorga also claimed there were "rural autonomies" north of the Danube in Wallachia and Moldavia—"rural Romanias" (in contrast to the "urban autonomies" in Moesia)—from the third century to the sixth and seventh centuries, that is, prior to the appearance of the Slavs and the Bulgars. Thus the Danube "flowed between Romanian banks."¹³

Mutařchiev rejected all this with a solid battery of references to sources and scholarly authorities. He pointed to the order of Emperor Aurelian(us) in 271 to evacuate the Roman province Dacia very well known to Iorga. A new province with the same name (Dacia Aureliana) was then established south of the Danube to the west of the river Vit (Latin Utus), later divided into Dacia

11 Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 45–49, 57; Nicolae Iorga, "Notes d'un historien relatives aux événements des Balcanes," *Académie roumaine. Bulletin de la Section historique* 1 (1912–1913), 57–101, esp. 63–64, 100; Nicolae Iorga, "Le problème de l'abandon de la Dacie par l'empereur Aurélien," *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 1, nos. 3–4 (1924), 37–58, esp. 54–58; Nicolae Iorga, *Études roumaines*, vol. 1, *Influences étrangères sur la nation roumaine* (Paris: Librairie universitaire, 1923), 17–23, 29–30, 32.

12 Nicolae Iorga, "Le Danube d'empire," in *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger*, vol. 1 (Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geutner, 1924), 13–24, esp. 13, 15, 21–22; Nicolae Iorga, "Serbes, bulgares et roumains dans la péninsule balcanique au moyen-âge," *Académie roumaine. Bulletin de la Section historique* 3, no. 3 (1916), 207–229, citation on 221; Nicolae Iorga, "Les plus anciens états slavo-roumains sur la rive gauche du Danube (VII^e siècle)," *Revue des études slaves*, 5, nos. 3–4 (1925), 171–176, citation on 173, 175–176; Nicolae Iorga, "La 'Romania' danubienne et les barbares au VI^e siècle," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 3, no. 1 (1924), 35–50, esp. 36, 39; Iorga, "Le problème de l'abandon," 54–55; Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 49.

13 Iorga, "Le problème de l'abandon," 54–58, citation on 58. Similarly Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 30.

Ripensis and Dacia Mediterranea. Mutařchiev argued that the local population could not have survived the numerous and devastating invasions of the lands north (and partly south) of the Danube by barbarians during the *Völkerwanderung* (Migration of the Peoples), starting with the Goths, followed by Taifals, Gepids, Bastarnae, then the Huns, followed by the Avars, and finally the settlement of the Slavs in the sixth century. According to him no Romanian element existed or “could exist” in the plains north of the lower Danube, that is, in today’s Wallachia, and still less in Moldavia from the third to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, particularly in the sixth and the seventh centuries (i.e., with the settlement of the Slavs and Bulgars). He also rejected Iorga’s contention that strongholds (fortified points) existed on the left bank of the Danube (in today’s Romania). According to him (also referring to the continuity theory, but in its Carpathian version) the Romanians descended from the Carpathians and started to populate Wallachia and Moldavia only in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the last waves of barbarians (Pechenegs and Cumans) had receded. A corollary of this is that the “Romanians” were not there when the Slavs flooded the Lower Danube and the provinces of the Balkan peninsula in the sixth century and when the Bulgars appeared on the scene in the seventh century.¹⁴

Mutařchiev contends that Romanization in general was much more restricted and incomplete than Iorga assumed. He gives a very different geography of the Romanized population (with reference to the Czech scholar Konstantin Jireček): a line from the Adriatic Sea at Lissus (today’s Alessio or Lezha in Albania) through Debar and Northern Macedonia, then between Niš and Sofia and then along the northern slopes of Haemus (the Balkan range) to the Black Sea coast, with the Latin-language zone stretching north of this line and the Greek-language zone stretching south of it (but also along the Black Sea coast in today’s Eastern Bulgaria and in Dobrudja). Thus according to him even the Romanization of Moesia (between the Danube and Haemus) was not complete and had its strongholds mainly in the towns and fortresses along the Danubian *limes*. In today’s Dobrudja (since 297 named the province of Little Scythia), the Roman element was even more thinly spread, and it remained a region with dual language, culture and ethnicity. In the subsequent era the north of the Balkan peninsula in particular was devastated by the barbarians, starting with the Goths, then the Huns and then the Ostrogoths, followed by the Avars, the Slavs and the Bulgars. The Romanized inhabitants were either wiped out or carried away or fled. Mutařchiev objects to Iorga’s contention that the barbarian incursions came mostly from the Middle Danube and Pannonia and affected the western part of the peninsula, mainly the province

14 Mutařchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 40–73.

of Illyricum. Mutaſchiev also objects to Iorga's depiction of the rule of the barbarians, including Attila, as transient and insignificant, and of Attila as subordinate to Byzantium and dependent upon it.¹⁵

Mutaſchiev entirely rejects Iorga's claim about the existence of a kind of "demotic Romania" or urban and rural Romanian "autonomies." He shows how Iorga misinterpreted the evidence of Theophylact Simocatta (about the small town of Asemus around 595) to mean a certain autonomy and then generalized it to apply to all of Moesia.¹⁶ Mutaſchiev ridicules Iorga's explanations about the possibility of such autonomies, namely that the Byzantine Empire was content to control the waterways and left the population in the provinces to live on their own—in relative or absolute autonomy; that these "autonomies" even across the Danube were protected by the Empire from the barbarians with various means (such as military expeditions, the building of roads and fortresses and the keeping of garrisons); that the barbarians themselves were meek colonists supplied by the Empire with lands for settlement.¹⁷ As can be seen, the two historians disagree over the entire description of the era and of the region, particularly its ethnic makeup.

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A second set of points concerns the history of (what would become) the Bulgarians.¹⁸ Iorga asserts the Romanized population participated in the founding of the First Bulgarian Kingdom in the Balkans in 680/681. According to him the Slavs "leaned upon" a sizable Romanized population that they encountered in Moesia, and the Bulgars themselves "had to negotiate" with it.¹⁹ Iorga describes the First Bulgarian Kingdom rather disparagingly (explicitly criticizing the first prominent Bulgarian academic historian, Zlatarski, for giving the Bulgarians' history "proportions and a significance it could not have had"). He says it was created by Turanian (Hun) military hordes or bands primarily interested in pillage, without a clear idea of statehood, no definite and

15 Ibid., 73–104. The treatment of Attila as "a functionary of the Roman Empire" is in Nicolae Iorga, *Points de vue sur l'histoire du commerce de l'Orient au moyen-âge. Conférences données à la Sorbonne* (Paris, 1924), 19–20.

16 Mutaſchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 104–113. About Asemus, see Nicolae Iorga, *Geschichte des Rumänischen Volkes*, vol. 1 (Gotha, 1905), 107.

17 Mutaſchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 113–121.

18 The first Bulgarian kingdom was founded in 680 or 681 by a Turkic tribe of Bulgars, who subjugated and eventually allied with the Slavs in today's northeastern Bulgaria and Dobrudja. This is seen as the beginning of the Bulgarian ethnogenesis, in which the Slav component and language prevailed and the Bulgarians became a Slavic people.

19 Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 57; Iorga, "Le Danube d'empire," 20–21.

stable territory or borders, no regular administration, no writing or culture, and lacking “national consciousness” (because they could not preserve their “national character” for long after mixing with the Slavs). Subsequently they came under Byzantine influence and adopted Christianity (out of expediency, Iorga suggests) and a Slavic script created not specifically for them but for the Slavic “race.” The state itself is presented as ephemeral (of “only” two centuries’ duration) and not recognized by Byzantium (in view of its universalist imperial theory), which tolerated it only until it was able to reconquer its territory.²⁰ Iorga also claims that for the Bulgars, Dobrudja was just a “corridor” through which they passed. In his opinion the Bulgarians were “not interested” in the Danube and the adjacent lands. He rejects the idea that the Bulgarians ruled the left bank (i.e., in present-day Romania) or even that they conquered the towns on the right bank (apart from Durostorum—present-day Silistra—which he presumes King Boris I got as a gift from his baptizer, the Byzantine emperor).²¹

Mutafchiev rejects Romanian participation in the first Bulgarian state as absolutely unfounded and without any support in the sources.²² He also rejects Iorga’s opinion that two of the pagan Bulgar kings—Sabinus and Paganus—were “Romanians.” Mutafchiev uses this occasion to attack Iorga’s handling of onomastics, and especially his manipulative statements that a certain name is encountered among the Romanians, thus insinuating that the person is of Romanian descent.²³ Mutafchiev rejects the disparaging treatment of the First Bulgarian Kingdom and stresses that Dobrudja was the heart of the Bulgarian kingdom from its creation until the second half of the tenth century (as attested to by numerous remnants of Bulgarian domination, including towns such as Little Preslav/Preslavets in Northern Dobrudja). He also asserts that not only were the fortified Danubian towns on the right bank dominated by the Bulgars

20 Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 54–63, 65–75; Iorga, “Notes d’un historien,” 58–63; Iorga, “Serbes, bulgares,” 209–210, 213; Nicolae Iorga, *Droits nationaux et politiques des roumains dans la Dobrogea* (Jassy, 1917), 20–22; Nicolae Iorga, “Origine et développement de l’idée nationale surtout dans le monde oriental,” *Études byzantines*, vol. 2 (Bucharest, 1940), 173–198, esp. 177, 192; Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de la romanité orientale*, vol. 2, *Jusqu’à l’an mille*, (Bucharest, 1937), 371–398.

21 Iorga, *Droits nationaux*, 19; Iorga, “Notes d’un historien,” 65, 66, 68, 100; Iorga, “Le Danube d’empire,” 21; Iorga, “Serbes, bulgares,” 223; Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de leur civilisation* (Paris: Henry Paulin, Éditeur, 1920), 49.

22 Mutafchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 121–137.

23 Ibid., 137–149. The assertion that Sabinus and Paganus belonged to the indigenous population because of their presumably Latin names appears in Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 58; Iorga, “Notes d’un historien,” 64; Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de leur civilisation*, 42.

but that the territories on its left bank (present-day Romania) were part of the First Bulgarian Kingdom as well—what was referred to as “trans-Danubian Bulgaria” in the fragmentary chronicle of the Scriptor Incertus. He also notes the tendentiousness in the way Iorga pushed the Bulgarian kingdom to the south and away from the Danube (reserved for the Romanians) and in the way he wrongly placed the first Bulgarian capital, Pliska, on the River Tundzha south of the Haemus range, when it was actually in Southern Dobrudja.²⁴

Iorga’s disparaging treatment of the first Bulgarian state draws not so much from his pride in the ethnogenesis of the Romanians (as descendents of Romanized Dacians), though this was a factor as well, but from his identification with the (early) Byzantine Empire. In fact, he views the barbarian Bulgars (and their Slav subjects) from the imperial standpoint, namely, as temporary settlers on Byzantine territory functioning as border guards (*limitanei*) against other similar tribes and, in the best case, as imitators of Byzantium. In his telling, the Bulgarian state was always provisional and in a precarious position, tolerated for practical reasons or lack of power until a legitimate re-conquest was possible, and thus a “second-rank” state. This certainly hurt the national pride of the Bulgarian historians, especially of a Byzantinist scholar such as Mutafchiev, who knew the history and doctrine of Byzantium as well as Iorga and was aware of the provisional situation of the Bulgarian state.²⁵

The eastern part of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, with its capital, Preslav, was conquered by the Russian prince Svyatoslav of Kiev and shortly afterwards fell to the Byzantine emperor Ioan (John) I Tsimisce (or Tzimisces) in 971. The struggle against Byzantium was then taken up in the western part of the Bulgarian kingdom (in Macedonia), with a new capital Ohrid (Ochrida), by the Comitopouli brothers (from *comites*—an administrative title). After a bitter, protracted struggle with King Samuil (or Samuel) the “Comitopoulos,” the western part was subjugated by Emperor Basil II (the Bulgar-slayer) in 1018. Bulgarian historiography treats Samuil’s (Ohrid) state as a continuation of the First Bulgarian Kingdom—the Western Bulgarian Kingdom. By contrast, Iorga calls the kingdom of Samuil “the Second Bulgarian Kingdom,” emphasizing the rupture and its separateness. Iorga claims that this kingdom was maintained (if not created) by Vlachs along with Albanians and Slavs, who

24 Mutafchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 149–169, 236. Iorga’s incorrect placement of Pliska is in Iorga, “Note d’un historien,” 100.

25 Petăr Mutafchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite* (Sofia: Balkan Publishing Company, 1999), 12, 46, 60–61. As Mutafchiev pointed out, it was Byzantium’s involvement in the more important Asia Minor that allowed for the establishment of the Bulgarian state, and the Empire would reclaim its territory when the situation allowed.

came to be called Bulgarians only because they had previously been part of the Bulgarian state (implying that they were not amalgamated with the Bulgar founders of the state). According to him:

National Bulgaria was exhausted [*s'était épuisée*] in the struggles with Byzantium at the end of the tenth century. There were not enough national elements left to immediately form another state.²⁶

In the same place he asserts that Macedonia, where this kingdom was based, was not “a region of Bulgarian life,” and its population was mostly rural—Albanian, Vlach (Romanian) and Serb (while the Bulgarians were primarily urban). Iorga explains the fact that contemporaries called Samuil’s state “Bulgaria” (just like the Bulgarian kingdom that followed it, which for Iorga is the “third”) as a necessity of legitimacy: “because if one wanted to be legitimate, and one was not Byzantium, one had to be Bulgaria: there was no other form of opposition against Byzantium.”²⁷ Also necessary for this legitimacy were the traditions of the Bulgarian Church. And he reiterates that there were only two (political) “forms” in the Balkans: the legitimate form of the Roman Empire in the hands of the Byzantines, and Bulgaria, “which signified the revolt against Graecized Constantinople,” so that:

Whoever revolted against Greek rule in Constantinople became *ipso facto* a Bulgarian in a political, though not in a national, sense [*rapport*]. In the Bulgarian past he found support for his new effort.²⁸

Again, Mutafchiev opposes Iorga on all these counts. He points to the inclusion of the larger part of Macedonia in the Bulgarian kingdom under King Boris I the Baptizer (852–889) and afterwards; next, the educational mission of St. Clement (a disciple of Cyril and Methodius, creators of the Slavic script) in Ohrid on behalf of the Bulgarian kingdom; and finally, the Bulgar names and titles of Samuil’s military commanders. He takes special care to assert that the

26 On Samuil’s kingdom: Iorga, *Études roumaines*, vol. 1, 45–46, citation on 46; Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 106–113; Iorga, “Notes d’un historien,” 76–77, 79; Iorga, *Points de vue*, 51, 78; Iorga, *Droits nationaux*, 31; Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de la romanité orientale*, vol. 3 (Les fondateurs d’état) (Bucharest, 1937), 7–9.

27 Iorga, *Études roumaines*, vol. 1, 46.

28 Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, citation on 107–108; Similarly Iorga, *Points de vue*, 51, 78 (“Bulgaria was a tradition and an ideological prop rather than a reality. If somebody wanted to construct something against Byzantium, he had to give it that name”).

term “Bulgarian” was not political but referred to a “nationality” and that the population in Macedonia, from which the Ohrid state drew its support, had a Bulgarian consciousness and was part of the same branch of the Slavs that formed a national entity—“the Bulgarian people.” Thus the western part of the Bulgarian kingdom, which was spared the destruction experienced by the eastern part, supplied the new forces of resistance.²⁹ While acknowledging the presence of Albanians and Vlachs in Thessaly and Epirus and in Macedonia during the eleventh century (registered by the sources), Mutaſchiev rejects the idea that they played an active role in the struggle against Byzantium. (He cites evidence of Vlachs opposing the revolt, and of Vlachs killing one of the Comitopouli brothers—David.) He also rejects Iorga’s implication that the Comitopouli, who started the revolt, were Vlachs because they were named David, Aaron, and Samuel as in the Old Testament, and such names were “specific to the Vlachs.” Mutaſchiev shows that this was not the case.³⁰ In fact, the Bulgarian character of Samuil’s state in Macedonia was contested most substantially by some Serbian historians and later by Macedonian ones (a subject outside the scope of this chapter). However, there was, as we have seen, a Romanian challenge to this, too.

Another point of contention concerns the status of the Byzantine *thema* (administrative unit) Paristrion or Paradanuvion, established after the fall of the First Bulgarian Kingdom on its former territory between the Danube and Haimos, or Haemus, as the Balkan range was called (roughly in what would later be called Dobrudja). The intense Romanian interest in this era can be explained by the absence of a Bulgarian state and the appearance of Vlachs in that region. This period was marked by the devastating incursions of the Pechenegs, starting in the mid-eleventh century, and later of Uz tribes (as well as Alans and Russians) into Paristrion and their subsequent settlement as border guards (*limitanei*) in the usual manner of the Empire. As a result the population became ethnically very mixed (the contemporary Byzantine author Attaliates or Attaleiates calls it “mixobarbarians”) and rebellious when not paid, and it collaborated with the barbarians across the Danube.

29 Mutaſchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 169–179, esp. 171, 172–173, 178. See also Mutaſchiev’s review of Iorga’s *Formes byzantines*, entirely dedicated to his views on the Western Bulgarian kingdom: Petăr Mutaſchiev, “N. Iorga, *Formes byzantines et réalités balcaniques*. Leçons faites a la Sorbonne. Bucarest-Paris, 1922,” *Makedonski pregled* 3, no. 2 (1927), 138–149, esp. 145.

30 Mutaſchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 179–188. Iorga’s contention is in Nicolae Iorga, “Serbes, bulgares,” 214; Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de la romanité*, vol. 3, 8. Iorga’s claim was based on evidence by the rabbi Benjamin of Tudela in the eleventh century.

A major revolt occurred from 1074 to 1091 under its tribal chiefs, primarily Pechenegs, and Byzantium lost control of the region until Alexios I Komnenos (Latinized: Alexius I Comnenus) defeated them in 1091. Iorga identifies various tribal names as standing for Vlachs; by contrast, he does not recognize any Bulgarians/Slavs in the region. He interprets as Romanian (in some places, partly Slavic) the names of the semi-independent chiefs of the Danubian cities Tatuš or Tatos, Satsa or Satzas or Satcha, Seslav or Sethslav, mentioned by Anna Komnene (Latinized as Comnena) and claims that this proves the existence of Romanian political “organizations.” Hence his article is titled “The First Romanian State Crystallizations.” His position towards the Pechenegs is ambiguous, and he sometimes assumes that the Romanians were subordinated to them but still autonomous. According to him the Romanians at that time were content with *voivodships*—that is, not full-fledged states—yet he regards this as the beginnings of organized political life of the Romanian people. The cradles of Romanian statehood—the earliest Romanian “state crystallizations”—are thus found south of the Danube (especially around Durostorum, present-day Silistra) and in Dobrudja as a whole.³¹ (This contradicts his earlier assertion that they were in the Carpathians.)³² Mutafchiev took issue with the assumption that peoples mentioned under other names in the sources (especially in Attaliates and Anna Komnene) were Vlachs, the arbitrary treatment of personal names, and the contradictory treatment of the relations with the Pechenegs. Furthermore, he rejected the whole idea of Romanian “state crystallizations” south of the Danube in the eleventh century.³³

A secondary debate arose on the question of the ethnicity of the “Scythian tribe” mentioned by Anna Komnene that crossed the Danube from the north (Wallachia) to the Byzantine province Paristrion between 1082 and 1085 after concluding peace with the chiefs of the rebellious Danubian towns. Mutafchiev and Zlatarski debated this with Iorga and Bănescu, who believed them to be Romanians, while Mutafchiev said they were Pechenegs and Zlatarski viewed them as Uz.³⁴ The issue in this rather pedantic controversy was the

31 Nicolae Iorga, “Les premières cristallisations d’état des roumains,” *Académie roumaine. Bulletin de la Section historique* 5–8, no. 1 (1920), 33–46, esp. 42–46; Iorga, *Droits nationaux*, 24–30; Iorga, *Études roumaines*, vol. 1, 41–42; Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de la romanité*, vol. 3, 7; Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de leur*, 52.

32 Iorga, *Geschichte des rumänischen*, vol. 1, 148–149.

33 Mutafchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 199–222.

34 Ibid., 204–222; Vasil Zlatarski, “Kakäv narod se razbira u Ana Komnena pod izraza ‘genos ti skytikon,’” in Vasil Zlatarski, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, vol. 2, 230–239 (originally published in *Izvestiya na Istoricheskoto druzhestvo*, vols. 11–12 [1932], 71–82); Nicolae Bănescu, “Les premiers témoignages byzantins sur les roumains du Bas-Danube,” *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 3, nos. 3–4 (1922), 287–310, esp. 301–304; Nicolae

presence of Romanians on both sides of the Lower Danube in the eleventh century. Numerous authors ventured other interpretations, as the great Hungarian medievalist Matthias Gyóni showed in meticulous detail. After a thorough review of all sources, Gyóni arrived at his own conclusion (namely, that they were most probably Pechenegs).³⁵

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The Second Bulgarian Kingdom was the result of a successful uprising against Byzantine rule in 1185–1186 under the leadership of the brothers Asen (Asan) and Peter (or, in Bulgarian, Petăr) (founders of the Assenid or Asanides dynasty, known in Bulgarian as “Asenevtsi”). Iorga ascribes to the Vlachs a leading role in the uprising and in the resulting state, which (echoing Alexandru Xénopol) he calls the Vlacho-Bulgarian Empire. The leaders Peter and Asen were Vlachs, according to both authors, who cited contemporary sources, especially Nicetas (Niketas) Choniates (see the quotation that begins this chapter) and the Austrian cleric Ansbert, chronicler of the Third Crusade (1189–1192), which passed through Byzantium.³⁶ According to Iorga, Vlachs from Thessaly and Pindus founded the Second (by his reckoning, Third) Bulgarian Kingdom, and the uprising started in Thessaly (for Xénopol the origins of the Vlacho-Bulgarian Empire were in the southern Balkans, but the uprising was initiated by the Vlachs from Haemus, in accordance with the sources).³⁷ In Iorga’s view

Bănescu, “Ein ethnographisches Problem am Unterlauf der Donau aus XI. Jahrhundert,” *Byzantion* 6 (1931), 297–307, esp. 302–303.

- 35 Matthias Gyóni, “Zur Frage der Rumänischen Staatsbildungen im XI. Jahrhundert in Paristrion,” in *Archivum Europae Centro-Orientalis*, ed. Emerich Lukinich, vols. 9–10 (Budapest, 1943–1944), 83–188, esp. 99–127. According to the various opinions they were Pechenegs, Vlachs, Russians, Uz or Cumans; according to Gyóni they were Pechenegs (182). The author addresses the related question about the ethnicity of the people under Tatus (and Satzsa) in Paristrion, concluding that they were Pechenegs who ruled over a very mixed population (184–186, 188). Finally, he rejects any idea of local autonomies or “beginnings of a state,” because these were administrative centers of a Byzantine *thema* (188). On the various opinions about this tribe, see also Yakov N. Lyubarskij, *Anna Komnina, Aleksjada. Vstupitel'naya stat'ya, perevod i komentariy* (Moscow, 1965), 528–529, note 723.
- 36 Alexandru Xénopol, “L'empire Valacho-bulgare,” *Revue historique* 47 (1891), 277–308, esp. 284–289, 293–295, 297, 301–302; Alexandru Xénopol, *Histoire des roumains de la Dacie Trajane (depuis les origines jusqu'à l'union des principautés en 1859)*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1896), 172–186.
- 37 On the second Bulgarian kingdom: Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 146–151; Iorga, *Points de vue*, 78–79; Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de leur*, 44–45; Iorga, “Notes d'un historien,” 83–89, 100; Iorga, *Études roumaines*, vol. 1, 46–48; Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de la romanité*,

the new state became a “national Bulgarian state” only in the second half of the thirteenth century, with the end of the Vlach dynasty of the Assenids (and even then there were kings of different origin, such as the Serb Constantine Tih and the Cuman Georgi Terter).³⁸ The Second Bulgarian Kingdom, with Tărnovo as the capital, was based in the Tărnovo region north of the central Balkan range. Its western part around Vidin (on the Danube) is referred to by Iorga as “Serb Bulgaria.” Iorga does not consider it properly Bulgarian, stating that ethnographers define this zone as intermediate between Bulgarians and Serbs.³⁹ Iorga categorically rejects the idea that the Second Bulgarian Kingdom incorporated lands across the Danube (in present-day Romania).⁴⁰ In addition, he identifies the Turkic Cumans, whose armies from across the Danube supported Asen and Peter, with Vlachs (or thinks that Vlachs came with them and under their name).⁴¹

Mutafchiev starts by refuting Iorga’s weaker claims. Thus Iorga’s contention that the uprising broke out in Thessaly is flatly contradicted by the evidence that the uprising broke out in the Haemus mountains (the Balkan range) and Moesia and that the state initially consisted only of the region between the Danube and Haemus and only later included Macedonia (under kings Kaloyan/Ioannitsa and Ivan Asen II/Ioan Asen II). Mutafchiev points out that the “national” character of a state does not depend on the ethnic descent of its king (as we will see, he rejects the idea that the Assenids were Vlachs, but leaves this question to be treated separately). The last two Bulgarian dynasties of the Second Bulgarian (Tărnovo) Kingdom—the Terter dynasty and

vol. 3, 104–121. About the origins of the uprising, see Alexandru Xénopol, “L’empire Valacho-bulgare,” 293, 301. In fact, there is no contradiction, because in his view the Vlachs in the Haemus had spread from the southern Balkans.

38 Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 165–167; Iorga, “Notes d’un historien,” 89, 101; Iorga, “Serbes, bulgares,” 218, 226. Similarly about the Bulgarianization of the “Vlacho-Bulgarian” Empire, see Xénopol, *Histoire des roumains*, 177–178; Xénopol, “L’empire Valacho-bulgare,” 294, 301–302. Xénopol attributes the “Bulgarianization” to the higher “culture” (church and state tradition, writing, etc.) of the Bulgarians and does not show great respect for the semi-nomadic Vlach shepherds. He also observes that the close relations between Bulgarians and Vlachs were typical of an era in which “ethnic differences had no value” (301). In fact, a certain recognition of the Bulgarian historical tradition in church, culture and urban life is to be found also in Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de la romanité*, vol. 3, 112, 121.

39 Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 167, 171.

40 Iorga, “Notes d’un historien,” 89; Iorga, *Études roumaines*, vol. 1, 48.

41 Iorga, “Serbes, bulgares,” 218; Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de leur*, 52.

the Shishman dynasty—were, he says, of Cuman origins, but “Slavicized.”⁴² It should be noted that while Mutafchiev had no problem accepting the idea that some Bulgarian rulers had Cuman origins—probably because the Cumans did not have heirs in the Balkans to claim their legacy and became assimilated with other peoples—he would never agree that the Assenids had Vlach or even Vlach-Bulgarian origins. The issue was all the more sensitive because, unlike the aforementioned dynasties, they were founders of the state. It is no accident that all Bulgarian historians (with one partial exception) to this day flatly refuse to consider the possibility of the brothers’ Vlach origin and propose instead a number of other “solutions” (as will be seen).

Later, in other works, Mutafchiev expounded his views on the origin of Asen and Petăr and the Vlach participation in the uprising. In a 1928 work, he states that he considers them to be of Russian-Cuman descent, and more precisely, of the Russian-Cuman aristocracy that presumably settled in the Danubian borderlands of Byzantium as guards (*limitanei*). Not content with this, he attempted to reconstruct the context of Russian-Cuman relations, alternately hostile and peaceable, in the Southern Russian lands in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, where the hypothetical amalgamation could have taken place. He then elaborated the supporting and rather strained idea of considerable Russian colonization in the Lower Danube, encouraged by Byzantium in order to obtain trustworthy Russian border guards and thus neutralize the rebellious Pechenegs and Cumans.⁴³

Among the Bulgarian authors, Mutafchiev was most adamant (and became increasingly radical) about denying any participation of Vlachs in the uprising and in denying the presence of “significant groups of Vlach population” in the Balkan range, where the uprising took place. His argument (in trying to invalidate or devalue the main contemporary source, Nicetas Choniates) is that the sources do not mention Vlachs in the Haemus region, either in the previous era or in the subsequent era (e.g., Georgios or George Akropolites). According to Mutafchiev (in a 1943 work), when Choniates mentioned “Vlachs” near Tărnovo, he meant Bulgarian shepherds (because “Vlach” had come

42 Mutafchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 188–196, esp. 191, 198. According to a present-day author, the Shishman dynasty (1323–1396) was genealogically related to the Assenid dynasty and not a different one: Ivan Bozhilov, “Bălgariya pri Asenevtsi,” *Istoricheski pregled* 36, no. 2 (1980), 80–95, esp. 81–82.

43 Petăr Mutafchiev, “Proizhodăt na Asenovtsi,” in Petăr Mutafchiev, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo,” 1973), 150–191 (originally in *Makedonski pregled* 4, no. 4 [1928], 1–42); Petăr Mutafchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya narod*, chast vtora [second part] (Sofia: Hemus, 1944, first published in 1943), 33.

to mean shepherd).⁴⁴ In the same place he also tries to explain Choniates's statement that the Moesians (or Moesi) of his time were known as Vlachs.⁴⁵ Mutafchiev says that following the archaizing change of the name Paristrion to Moesia (the name of the former Roman province there), "Moesian" and "Vlach" were equated because the Balkan Vlachs were known to be descendents of the Romanized population of this Roman province (Moesia). Later we will look at other Bulgarian authors' attempts to explain away the evidence in order to defend their beliefs.

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Mutafchiev and Iorga clashed specifically over Dobrudja, which for most of the time was part of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom but drifted away to become an autonomous despotate when the kingdom weakened. Iorga initially considered the despot Dobrotica, who gave the region its name, to be a "Bulgarian prince" and an adventurer and *condottiere* who ruled over a mixed population on the Black Sea coast. Later, however, he reached the conclusion that this was a Romanian name (he wrote it variously as Dobrotic, Dobrotitch or Dobrotici), which he said meant "son of Dobrota" and belonged to a series of Romanian names with the suffix *-ota*; his brother and predecessor Balica presumably also had a Romanian name.⁴⁶ Mutafchiev took special care to refute Iorga on the issue of the name because it supposedly implied the ethnicity of Dobrudja's fourteenth-century rulers. As he pointed out, the name was Dobrotica (written in Bulgarian as "Dobrotitsa"), it was Slavic, and his predecessor as ruler of the principality, Balic (a brother of Dobrotica), had a Turanian name.⁴⁷ In

44 Mutafchiev, "Proizhodăt na Asenovtsi," 150–153; Petăr Mutafchiev, "Kăm văprosa za bălgaro-rumănskite otnosheniya v srednite vekove," *Godishnik na Sofiyskiya universitet. Istoriko-filologicheski fakultet* 28 (1932), kniga 5 [book 5], 1–56, esp. 28–30. Mutafchiev promises to give a more detailed account of the ethnic situation and the ethnic relations in the Lower Danube in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but he does not follow through. See also Mutafchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya*, 36–38. Here Mutafchiev also cites biased opinions of Byzantine authors against the Vlachs and maintains that if Vlach shepherds did join the revolt, it could have been only for a time, because they were incapable of a prolonged bloody struggle for a Bulgarian state.

45 The phrase reads: "the barbarians in the vicinity of Mount Haimos, formerly called Mysians and now named Vlachs"—*O City of Byzantium*, 204.

46 Iorga, "Notes d'un historien," 96–97, 101; Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 168; Iorga, *Études roumaines*, vol. 1, *Influences étrangères*, 50–51; Iorga, *Droits nationaux*, 36–43, esp. 46; Iorga, *Études roumaines*, vol. 1, 51; Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de leur*, 75.

47 Mutafchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 196–197.

a special article he asserted that the name Dobrotica was Slavic in both root and (diminutive) suffix *-ica*.⁴⁸ Iorga, in turn, objected to Mutaŭchiev's rendering of the name as Dobrotitsa instead of Dobrotic and claimed that the names Dobrota and Balica were Romanian or "also Romanian" and that Balica in particular was a Cuman name, but also Turkic, and it was quite widespread among the Romanians.⁴⁹ Then Mutaŭchiev published another article, where he argued that the name Dobrotica or Dobrotitsa (and not Dobrotic as with Iorga) is Slavo-Bulgarian, while the name of his older brother Balic (not Balica) is Turanian and more specifically of Cuman origin. However, said Mutaŭchiev, this prince (like the last two Bulgarian dynasties of Terterovtsi and Shishmanovtsi) was Bulgarianized by connecting his fortunes with the population he ruled and by assimilating to it (the principality of Dobrudja having preserved its Bulgarian character in spite of the influx of Cumans). He ended his article by accusing Iorga of tendentiously claiming the name of the ruler of Dobrudja as Romanian and the person under that name as Vlach.⁵⁰ Evidently, the name was thought to indicate the ethnicity of the person and somehow to extend over the region he ruled, hence the meticulous and arcane linguistic controversies.

The debate over the historical evolution of Dobrudja (which in previous eras was called Little Scythia and Paristrion) and of the Bulgarian and Romanian presence there did not originate with Iorga and Mutaŭchiev but much earlier. It would lead us too far astray to trace the debate in its various linguistic, ethnographic and geographical aspects. Still, something needs to be said about the part played in it by the historians (at least some major figures) and the way claims over Dobrudja were framed. Since Mutaŭchiev was very vocal in that debate and engaged some Romanian scholars, this might be the right place to go into the issue.

Vasil Zlatarski reviewed the history of Dobrudja (in 1918).⁵¹ The main points are the following. After the barbarians' devastating raids during the *Völkerwanderung*, some Slavic tribes settled in Eastern Moesia and Little

48 P. Mutaŭčiev, "Dobrotič—Dobrotica et la Dobroudža," *Revue des études slaves*, 7, no. 1–2 (1927), 27–41. Also in Bulgarian: "Dobrotich—Dobrotitsa—Dobrudzha," in Mutaŭchiev, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, vol. 2, 104–119.

49 Iorga, "Dobrotitch (Dobrotic, Dobrotici), quelques observations," *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 5, nos. 3–6 (1928), 133–136.

50 Petăr Mutaŭchiev, "Oshte za Dobrotica," in Petăr Mutaŭchiev, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1973), 120–129, esp. 122, 129.

51 Vasil Zlatarski, "Istoriko-politicheska sädba," in *Dobrudja. Geografija, istoriya, etnografija, stopansko i dāzhavno-politicheskoe znachenie* (Sofia, 1918), 43–68. This volume was also published in German: *Die Dobrudtcha. Geographie, Geschichte, Ethnographie, wirtschaftliche und politische Bedeutung* (Sofia: Druck der Deutschen Balkan-Zeitung, 1918).

Scythia (Dobrudja) in the fifth and sixth centuries. Then came the Bulgars, and the Bulgarian state was established in the northern part of today's Dobrudja and southern Bessarabia in 680. Thus Dobrudja was the place where the Bulgarian state was born and started expanding to include the Moesian and the Dacian Slav tribes. During Byzantine rule (which in this region started in 971) Dobrudja was invaded by Pechenegs and Cumans, who remained there after the Assenids founded the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. It fell under the Tartars in the thirteenth century, and after they were driven out, the Cumans settled in the region in the first half of the fourteenth century. The Cumans recognized Bulgarian sovereignty, and Dobrudja was part of the Bulgarian state. Later on, as the Tărnovo Kingdom grew weak, Dobrudja was ruled by the semi-autonomous *archont* or *voivod* Balic (of Cuman origin) at Karvona (today's Balchik) on the Black Sea coast. In the 1450s he was succeeded by his brother Dobrotic (Dobrotica), who was a vassal of the Bulgarian Tărnovo Kingdom of Ivan Alexander and became independent after his death in 1371. Dobrotic was succeeded by his son Ivanko, who became a vassal of the Turks. After his death the Wallachian *voivod* Mircea (1386–1418) took control of the region until defeated by the Turks at Rovino in 1394, and thus the region fell under Turkish rule at the end of the fourteenth century. During the initial centuries of Turkish rule (the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), Dobrudja was devastated by Tartars and colonized by Turks and Tartars, while the surviving Bulgarian and Christian population decreased and was assimilated among the Muslims. As a border province of the Ottoman Empire, Dobrudja was subject to invasions and devastation, especially during the wars with Russia, which were accompanied by the mass emigration of the Christian population to Bessarabia and the southern Russian lands. After the Crimean War (1853–1856) the Russian Tartars were driven out of Russia and settled in the region. The Berlin Congress in 1878 gave Romania the region even though Romania did not initially seek it (the Romanian king, Carol, expressed his disappointment that Bessarabia, which had many Romanians, was exchanged with Russia for Dobrudja, which had few Romanians)⁵² and, according to Zlatarski, did not have “historical rights” to it. The curious thing about this rather moderate and neutral description is how the mention of so many ethnic changes goes hand-in-hand with historical claims of Dobrudja for the Bulgarians.

Somewhat later (in 1927), Mutafchiev also reviewed the history of Dobrudja, particularly its principal (Danubian) town Drăstăr (Roman Durostorum, now Silistra), which was the center of *thema* Paristrion (eleventh and

52 See the excerpts from the Romanian press of the time collected by Anastas Ischirkoff, *Les bulgares en Dobrudja* (Bern, 1919), 77 ff.

twelfth centuries). He presents the history of the town and its surroundings, with special emphasis on dramatic historical events, most notably the besieging of Svyatoslav by Ioan Tsimisce, which marked the fall of the First Bulgarian Kingdom. Mutafchiev concludes that since 680 (the foundation of the first Bulgarian state), the town was Bulgarian for more than five centuries, Byzantine for a century and a half, in Pecheneg hands for a quarter of a century, and under Romanian rule (under *voivod* Mircea) for only eight or nine years. Hence, in his opinion the “historical rights” are unequivocally on the Bulgarian side.⁵³

In 1943 Mutafchiev published another work on Dobrudja, in which he sought to refute the idea of an early settlement of Seljuk Turks in Dobrudja in the thirteenth century and tried to clarify the origins of the Gagauz, a Turkic ethnic (and language) group of predominantly Christian faith in Dobrudja.⁵⁴ He was probably right in refuting the Seljuk hypothesis because the sources were written much later and were legendary in nature. He was probably also right that today’s Gagauz originated from the onetime Pechenegs, Uz and Cumans, who—in a more risky hypothesis—became first Christianized and Bulgarianized but, with the influx of new Turkic groups after the Ottoman conquest, were re-Turkicized (by adopting the Turkish language and by some converting to Islam), along with most Bulgarians. The point is that after listing the various Turkic invasions of (Southern) Dobrudja under Byzantine rule (eleventh to twelfth centuries) and during the late Bulgarian Middle Ages, he asserts that despite all turns of fortune, “the Bulgarians continued to form the predominant part of its population.”⁵⁵ This sounds ironic, given that he acknowledges the thorough ethnic changes in the subsequent era of Ottoman rule, as a result of which (Southern) Dobrudja emerged upon Bulgarian independence as largely de-Bulgarianized and with an overwhelmingly Turkish population.⁵⁶

This provoked a reaction from Gheoghe I. Brătianu. He criticized Mutafchiev’s certainty that the majority of the population remained Bulgarian, at least in

53 Petăr Mutafchiev, “Sădbinite na srednovekovniya Drăstăr,” in *Silistra i Dobrudzha. Nauchno-kulturni izsledvaniya*, kniga 1 [book 1] (Sofia, 1927), 101–196, esp. 192–196.

54 Petăr Mutafchiev, “Mnimoto preselenie na seldzhushki turtsi v Dobrudzha prez XIII vek,” in Petăr Mutafchiev, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1973), 607–745, citation on 715 (first published in German in *Sbornik BAN*, kniga 16 [book 16], 1943, nos. 1–2, 1–128 and in Bulgarian in *Dobrudzha. Sbornik ot studii*. (Sofia, 1947), 108–146).

55 Mutafchiev, “Mnimoto preselenie,” 715. This is argued by the fact that the 1387 trade treaty between the last ruler of Dobrudja and Genoa mentions only Bulgarians and Greeks as his subjects.

56 Ibid., 722–723.

origin (if not in language and religion), from the beginning of the Middle Ages, in spite of Byzantine rule, a period of autonomy from the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (with partial Byzantine domination of the sea coast) and the centuries of Ottoman rule. Brătianu proposes a very different scenario. He believes that Dobrudja gradually detached from Bulgaria starting with the reign of King Theodore Svestoslav (1300–1322), that the state of Dobrotic had no precise “nationality” and that the reference to Dobrudja as the “third Bulgaria” on the eve of the Ottoman conquest (in the narrative of German traveler Johann Schiltberger) does not necessarily indicate the population of the region or that the Bulgarians were a majority, but was instead an established geographical term and a political term, which

evoked the existence of a sovereignty that had had its era of splendor, and whose name meant more for the Westerners than the unknown peoples whose real presence could be detected in the various Balkan and Danubian countries.⁵⁷

As for the Gagauz (also in Bessarabia), in Brătianu's view they are an ethnic amalgam whose Bulgarian element should not be overestimated. Brătianu regards them as a “living testimony” of this region's uniqueness, detached by historical vicissitudes from Bulgaria. Yet he does not refrain from claiming the lands of despot Dobrotic (on the eve of the Turkish conquest) for the Wallachian prince Mircea and not for the Bulgarian king.⁵⁸

Most vocal on the Romanian side in claiming historical rights over Dobrudja was Bănescu, in a short work of 1928.⁵⁹ These are based (excluding the geographical claim that the region is an integral part of the region north, and not south, of the Danube) on: Romanization since the mid-first century; the survival of Romanity (*romanité*, meaning the Romanized population) in semi-autonomy during the era of barbarian invasions; the preservation of the Romanized population in the Danubian towns and some Black Sea towns (defended by the Byzantine fleet) under the first Bulgarian state; the resurgence of Romanity after the fall of the Bulgarian state in several “small states” in Paristrion (under Tatus and Satzas, though they are not claimed here as Romanian); the “unconsolidated” rule of the second Bulgarian empire over the Danube Delta; and the persistence of Romanity toward the end of the four-

57 Gheorge I. Brătianu, “Nouvelles contributions à l'histoire de la Dobroudja au Moyen âge,” *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 21 (1944), 70–81, citation on 80–81.

58 Ibid., 81.

59 Nicolae Bănescu, *La Roumanité de la Dobroudja à travers les siècles* (Bucharest, 1928), 3–19.

teenth century in the semi-autonomous despotate under Dobrotic until the Romanian *voivod* Mircea took possession of Dobrudja. To cite the conclusion: "All these facts are quite conclusive. They show us how robust Romanian life has been there. Since ancient Rome, which so deeply implanted its civilization in Little Scythia, Romanity has never perished. When the force of the great founder collapsed, the New Rome became the protector of the Roman tradition on this soil. The armies of Byzantium have defended it through long centuries . . . Under this protection, the inheritors of Romanity were able to organize themselves around 1080 in those small states mentioned above. The heritage of Paristrion of the great Byzantine times passed to Mircea-*voivod*, the glorious Wallachian prince."⁶⁰ It is worth noting that the established continuity in the form of "heritage" glosses over a gap of three centuries.

As the above shows, the debate was couched in terms of "historical rights" over the region. The historical rights themselves were asserted by citing rule over the region for a possibly longer period (as the Bulgarian side did) and/or presence of the respective ethnic group or people (as Romanian and Bulgarian authors did). Historical rights were also asserted by demonstrating the region's links with important historical events for the respective peoples, that is, with their "historical fates." For the Bulgarian side this was the foundation of the first Bulgarian state and the dramatic events of its fall with the siege of Durostorum. For the Romanian side this meant the appearance of Vlachs and even Vlach "states" during the Byzantine rule of Paristrion (with Mircea as their legitimate "heir"). In the process of establishing a "national" continuity, the historians gloss over centuries of foreign rule and gaps in the record. When they assert ethnic preponderance, they disregard other ethnic groups despite mentioning them, or suppose them to have melted into their own people, that is, to have been Bulgarianized or Romanianized.

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More generally, Iorga presented the Bulgarian medieval history of all kingdoms in one specific and consistent way—as "non-national," not based on a unitary ethnic element, and in this sense, non-modern. His main arguments are

60 Ibid., 18–19. Similarly Nicolae Bănescu, "La Roma nuova alle foci del Danubio," in *Publicazioni dell'Istituto per l'Europa Orientale* (Rome, 1923), 580–585. The work ends by asserting that the Romans—first the "mother-city" and then the "Nuova Roma" (meaning Byzantium)—exercised a long and continuous possession, protection and beneficial civilizational influence over Dobrudja, and that hence the Romanians (as their descendants) had a "dual right" to love and defend it.

its imitation of the Byzantine Empire and attempts to assume an universal and ethnically (“nationally”) neutral “Byzantine form,” as well as the “imperial” ambitions of the greatest rulers of the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms—Simeon or Symeon (893–927), Kaloyan or Ioannitsa (1197–1207, in Greek “Kaloioannes,” meaning “Ioannes the Handsome,” in Latin “Caloiohannes”), Ivan (or Ioan) Asen II (1218–1241). While he acknowledged to a certain extent a “national” (Slav) character of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, he denied that Samuil’s (Western) Bulgarian Kingdom and the Second Bulgarian Kingdom had such a character, at least until the end of the Assenids, because of the Vlach dynasty (and other kings of different ethnicity), of imperial ambitions, and of the ethnically heterogeneous components, notably Vlachs, Albanians and Cumans. Conversely, he stressed the “national” base of the demotic and largely patriarchal way of life of the Vlachs and of their organizations and alleged political formations, as well as the later Romanian states of Wallachia and Moldavia. This ethnic base and self-government (a sort of “popular sovereignty”) and the notion of homeland (of “Țara-Românească,” the Romanian land) instead of imperial ambitions are, he maintains, modern phenomena, unlike the “medieval” (or feudal) character of the Bulgarian (but also the Serbian and Hungarian) political formations. He thus regards the Vlach formations as specifically modern; moreover, amid the medieval states “there appeared this ‘Romania’ with the notion of the modern state at the dawn of the modern times”—an anticipation of communist *protochronism* (a nationalist trend of historiography looking for Romanian antecedents of various phenomena).⁶¹ Yet Iorga played a double game here: he treated the Romanian political tradition as a kind of demotic but authentic version of the Roman Empire (and the Romanian *Domn* as the local demotic image of the Roman emperor). In an unresolved contradiction, he described a Romania that was both more ancient and more modern than Byzantium (and medieval Bulgaria), an empire and a nation-state in one.⁶²

61 Iorga, “Serbs, bulgares,” 224–226, 228, citation on 225; Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 34–35, 66–68, 100–101, 104–105; Iorga, *Études roumaines*, vol. 1, *Influences étrangères*, 40–48. To quote: “So while the Middle Ages continued with the Slavs until the complete exhaustion of the race, which destroyed itself in coveting the impossible possession of Byzantium, the patriarchal organism of the Romanians preserved in a popular guise, naive and rural, the traditions of the Empire and anticipated in the Carpathians the principles that, everywhere in Europe, would usher in the modern era” (43); Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de la romanité*, vol. 2, 371, 386; Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de leur*, 47–49.

62 The double game is noted by Diana Mishkova (in this volume).

Mutařchiev disputed Iorga's characterization of Romanian history as "national" and "modern" and of the Romanian state as based on ethnicity (and "absolute suzerainty"), in contrast to a Bulgarian state that was "imperial" and indifferent to ethnicity (like Byzantium). Mutařchiev also opposed calling the Serbian state "semi-feudal" and Hungary and Poland "feudal" (based on homage and vassal-suzerain relations). He argued that Bulgarian history was also "national," that is, based on a homogeneous ethnicity or people (*narod*, or nationality), resulting from the merger between Bulgars and the numerous Slavs with rulers mostly of the same ethnicity; he also asserted the existence of Bulgarian national and state consciousness behind the common name. Conversely, he pointed out that the Romanian principalities in Wallachia and Moldavia were vassals to the Hungarians, the Polish and the Turks, and thus quite "feudal." He also ridiculed any idea that there was "popular sovereignty" at the time.⁶³

On a related note, Mutařchiev emphasized the difference (intentionally blurred by Iorga) between the erstwhile Romanized local population (*romani*) and the contemporary Romanians. He also asserted (like some earlier Romanian authors, as will be shown later) that the Romanized population became Romanians only after mixing with the Slavs and after their language (a provincial Latin dialect) was subjected to the strong influence of the Slavic language—thus attacking both the continuity thesis and the denial (or belittlement) of the Slav element's role in the Romanian ethnogenesis.⁶⁴

In various places and in the conclusion of his book (especially in the Bulgarian original), Mutařchiev accused Iorga of many factual mistakes, of a "conjectural" approach and of wishful thinking not based on evidence. Above all, Mutařchiev accused Iorga of tendentiousness, of systematically distorting and misinterpreting the historical facts to establish the existence of a "Romanian Danube"—Romanian continuity in Wallachia, Moesia (between the Danube and the Balkan range) and Little Scythia (Dobrudja). He also charged him with inflating and glorifying the role of the Vlachs in the history of the Balkans and in Bulgarian history in particular while diminishing the role of the Bulgarians (and other Balkan peoples) and disparaging them. In one of his more extreme statements, Mutařchiev says that Iorga and the Romanian historians of his school "invent a history of their people, who alone among the

63 Mutařchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 7, 41, 128, 171–173, 178, 191, 237–238; Mutařchiev, "N. Iorga, Formes byzantines," 145.

64 Mutařchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 71–72.

European peoples did not have a history of their own until the very end of the Middle Ages.”⁶⁵

Furthermore, Mutafchiev (who fought on the Dobrudja front in World War I) charged Iorga with political motivations and chauvinism (and pan-Romanianism) in order to justify the annexation of Southern Dobrudja from Bulgaria in the Second (Inter-Allied) Balkan War in 1913. This, he says, is done by presenting Danubian Bulgaria to the outside world as an “age-old cradle of Romanian culture and a hearth of Romanian statehood” and presenting its history as part of a continuous Romanian national history (from the Roman era onwards), so that the Danube “has always been flowing between Romanian banks and the Bulgarians were never interested in the lands on its southern bank,” that is, in their own lands.⁶⁶

Iorga responded to Mutafchiev’s book in a short review in which, amidst some caustic remarks, he denied some of the views ascribed to him, mostly by softening and qualifying them. For example, he denied ever saying that Dobrudja remained untouched by the barbarian invasions; he did not pretend that the left bank of the Danube was protected by Byzantium; he did not speak of Romanian masses in Moesia, but only of Romanized remnants; and he did not say that the names Dobrotic and Balica had full parallels in Romanian.⁶⁷ But it was his followers who took up the debate in earnest.

In viewing the debate with the distance of time and beyond the directly political motivation and the empirical particulars, the following can be noted. When presenting medieval Bulgarian history as non-national (but imperial) and pre-modern (feudal), Iorga hit a very vulnerable spot. This was especially so because the much glorified medieval history of the Bulgarians was a major resource of the pointed and resentful contemporary (interwar) Bulgarian nationalism, which projected its concepts backwards and conceived of medieval history in its own image as “national” history. To say that Bulgarian medieval history was not “national” or not national enough was anathema to the national(ist) historians. A nationalist like Iorga accusing other nationalist historians of nationalist distortion of (their) history was even more infuriating. And Iorga targeted precisely the greatest Bulgarian kings for pursuing a futile imperial ideal and dissipating the “national” energies, and for distorting the “national character” of the Bulgarians by Byzantinization (absorb-

65 Ibid., 235–240, citation on 238. Similarly Mutafchiev, “N. Iorga, Formes byzantines,” 142.

66 Mutafchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 239–240.

67 Nicolae Iorga, “Comtes-Rendues. Petăr Mutafchiev, Bulgares et roumains dans l’histoire des pays danubiens, Sofia, 1932,” *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 10, nos. 1–3 (1933), 67–72.

ing the Byzantine cultural influence). These were exactly the views held by Mutafchiev (and by Zlatarski)—though not by official Bulgarian interwar nationalism, which took pride in the Bulgarian medieval imperial idea—and they were even more infuriating to hear from Iorga.⁶⁸

Moreover, Iorga claimed the Bulgarian state of the Assenids mostly for the Romanians (and to some extent that of Samuil in Macedonia), thus “robbing” the Bulgarians of a great deal of the history they took pride in. Now the Bulgarians stood to lose more, symbolically, in history than (they felt) they had lost in reality, which made Bulgarian authors especially bitter. This inevitably shattered the Bulgarian national master narrative, already established (most notably by Zlatarski) and widely propagated. The Bulgarian medieval states—whether two or three—were undeniably there from very early on, and they were still called Bulgarian. As we saw, Iorga himself acknowledged the Bulgarianization of the Tărnovo Kingdom of the Assenids after the founding brothers. Yet some of the basic presuppositions and certainties about them were questioned by Iorga, especially the continuity of Bulgarian statehood and the homogeneity of the Bulgarian people. To make things worse, the state (especially the Tărnovo Kingdom) was portrayed as being populated by various peoples and ruled by “foreign” dynasties. Even the continuity of territory was questioned, not only as regards Dobrotic’s Dobrudja, but also Samuil’s Macedonia and Ivan Sratsimir’s (supposedly semi-Serbian) Vidin Kingdom, which separated itself from the Tărnovo Kingdom in 1356 (or 1371). Beneath it all lay the unsettling question: what did “Bulgarian” actually mean at the time? We will come back to that later.

I have depicted Iorga’s and Mutafchiev’s ideas in some detail intentionally. They present an overview of the battle lines and the entrenched positions. The subsequent historiographical wars would contest basically the same ground, adding new weapons and ammunition in the form of “facts” and arguments.

68 They were developed in Petăr Mutafchiev, “Kăm filosofiyata na bălgarskata istoriya (Vizantinizmăt v srednovekovna Bălgariya),” *Filosofski pregled* 3, no. 1 (1931), 27–36 (also in German and known to Iorga: P. Mutafčiev, “Der Byzantinismus im mittelalterlichen Bulgarien,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 [1929], 387–394); Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoriya na bălgarskata dărzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 1, chast 1 [part 1] (Sofia, 1918), 4–5; Vasil Zlatarski, *Leksionni kursove na prof. Vasil Zlatarski*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. Kliment Ohridski,” 1999), 82.

Other Scholars Join the Debate

Mutařchiev's attack was actually answered by Petre Panaitescu (and later, Bănescu).⁶⁹ Panaitescu chose to address only a few of the issues Mutařchiev raised: the location and migrations of the Romanian population in the Middle Ages and the role of the Romanians in the Bulgarian kingdoms. On the first question, in line with the continuity thesis, he maintained that the Romanized (Thracian) population continued to exist along the Lower Danube (south and north of the river) and in Dobrudja from the end of the first century until the seventh century, which then was gradually "dislocated" with the formation of the First Bulgarian Kingdom (680) to the western part of the Balkans (where it was influenced by the Albanian language);⁷⁰ the dislocation was completed toward the tenth or eleventh century. Yet some Romanian (meaning Romanized) elements endured north of the Danube in parts of Wallachia.⁷¹ On the second question, Panaitescu asserted that the Vlachs (Romanians) had an important role in the kingdom of Samuil and a leading role in the "Vlachobulgarian" (that is, Second Bulgarian) Kingdom, and he maintained that its founding dynasty was of Vlach origin. He also believed that the Vlachs played an important role in the First Bulgarian Kingdom. What is interesting here is that all this is couched in terms of a friendly collaboration between Bulgarians and Vlachs against Byzantium and argued by citing the "impossibility of purely national states" in the Middle Ages. The study of these friendly relations and collaboration in the past is also presented as a contribution to peace ("*une oeuvre de paix*") in the present.⁷²

Panaitescu misrepresented some of Mutařchiev's theses, attributing to him the assertion that the Romanians were Slavs because of the presence of many Slavic words in the Romanian language.⁷³ He also charged that Mutařchiev did not take a stand on the Romanian habitat and place of origin. Finally, he accused Mutařchiev of writing a "historical pamphlet against the Romanians," a "political thesis" based on "political calculations," a "political polemic" "full of passion" instead of a dispassionate scientific historical study searching for the truth.⁷⁴ Yet Panaitescu's own use of the past served a political purpose as

69 Petre P. Panaitescu, *Les relations bulgaro-roumains au moyen age (à propos d'un livre récent de Mr. P. Moutařchiev)* (Extrait de la Revista Aromânească, I, 1929), 3–25.

70 According to the theory of G. Weigand.

71 Panaitescu, *Les relations bulgaro-roumains*, 10–19.

72 *Ibid.*, 23–25.

73 *Ibid.*, 5, 20–21.

74 *Ibid.*, 9–10, 25.

well—peace in the present, but premised on the recognition of Romania's annexation of Southern Dobrudja.

In 1932 Mutaŋchiev reacted to Panaitescu's critique. He clarified his position on a Romanized population in the Lower Danube, stating that even if some remnants of it survived the Gothic (and other barbarian) devastations from the third to the sixth centuries, they disappeared completely at the beginning of the seventh century, destroyed or assimilated among the Slav population. This was especially so in Moesia between the Danube and the Haemus range with adjacent Little Scythia (meaning Dobrudja), which were particularly exposed to the barbarian invasions.⁷⁵ As to the role of the Vlachs in the "Vlach-Bulgarian Empire" of the Assenids, he reiterated that there was no Vlach population (or *romani*) in the Haemus range and in Moesia. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain why the name "Vlach" disappears from the sources some twenty years after the uprising in the early thirteenth century, precisely when the state was being consolidated.⁷⁶ Mutaŋchiev also clarified his views on the initial homeland of the Vlachs/Romanians, namely (following Robert Roesler) that the mountainous western half of the Balkan peninsula (southwestern Serbia, Herzegovina, part of Montenegro and southern Bosnia) was where the Romanized elements found refuge in the era of the barbarian invasions and were able to survive. In these lands the Vlachs were neighbors of the Albanians, which explains the many commonalities between the two languages, as well as the traces of Romanian topographical nomenclature there. From here they later migrated south to Pindus and Thessaly and north to Transylvania. Thus Mutaŋchiev rejected the continuity thesis even in its Carpathian version. That the Vlachs lived mostly in the mountains is also confirmed by the Romanian Latin terminology connected with mountainous terrain, while the terminology of plains (and of agriculture and rivers and fishing) was mostly borrowed from the Slavs.⁷⁷

Mutaŋchiev rejected the view (wrongly) ascribed to him by Panaitescu that the Romanian people were Slavic or that the Romanian language was Slavic. Yet he emphasized the great influx of Slavic words (and some morphological features), both from Old Bulgarian (in fact, Slavic) and from the Middle Bulgarian of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, into the Romanian language (with reference to linguistic authorities, including the Romanian philologist Ovid

75 Mutaŋchiev, "Kăm văprosa za bălgaro-rumănskite," 3–9, 16–22.

76 Ibid., 28–30.

77 Ibid., 30–31.

Densușianu⁷⁸). He also claimed that Slavs participated in the Romanian ethnogenesis and that the Romanized population (*romani*) became Romanians only after a great deal of Slavic blood was transfused into them. He also held that many unassimilated Slavs lived in Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania.⁷⁹ By contrast, there are many fewer borrowed Latin words in the Bulgarian language; most of the borrowings occurred via Greek (through Byzantium), and only a few were direct borrowings.⁸⁰ As for his assertion of the “national” character of the Bulgarian medieval state, which Panaitescu considers a projection of modern notions upon the past, Mutafchiev replied that this was meant in the sense that the state leaned upon “an ethnically formed mass” (just like the Serbian state) rather than being a conglomerate of peoples, in spite of the imperial dreams of some Bulgarian rulers (and that it was actually Iorga who modernized the past).⁸¹

In the second part of the same work, Mutafchiev addressed another Romanian historian—Nicolae Bănescu from Cluj, a follower of Iorga. Bănescu further elaborated some of Iorga’s theories and ideas, including that there was a thorough Romanization of the left bank of the Danube and Romanian continuity in Wallachia; that there were semi-autonomous towns on the Danube in the sixth and seventh centuries; that the Danube was a major communication line of the Byzantine Empire and the Byzantine fleet served as protector of the “autonomous Romanias” alongside it after the arrival of the Bulgarians; that the cities in the delta remained in Byzantine hands, and Byzantine domination over Dobrudja continued in strategic points during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom; and that the Bulgarians only occasionally controlled Dobrudja.⁸² Bănescu went even further than Iorga when interpreting as Romanian states

78 Ovid Densușianu, *Histoire de la langue roumaine*, vol. 1, *Les origines* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, ed., 1901), 240–241, 279. Other cited authorities are Franc Miklošič, Julius Jung and Kristian Sandfeld-Jensen.

79 Mutafchiev, “Kăm vāprosa za bălgaro-rumănskite,” 9–16. According to Xénopol as well, Romanians in the East were Dacian-Romans transformed by the Slavs, just as the French in the West were Celtic Romans transformed by the Germans. See Xénopol, *Histoire des roumains*, vol. 1, 130. That Slavs lived in Wallachia and Transylvania takes as its source the Bulgarian philologist and ethnographer Lyubomir Miletich on the basis of his study of documents from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries.

80 Mutafchiev, “Kăm vāprosa za bălgaro-rumănskite,” 22–28.

81 *Ibid.*, 33.

82 Nicolae Bănescu, “La domination byzantine sur les régions du Bas-Danube,” *Bulletin de la Section historique de Académie roumaine* 13 (1927), 10–22, esp. 13–15; Bănescu, “La Roma nuova,” 580–585; Bănescu, *La Roumanité de la Dobroudja*, 5–6, 10, 11, 18.

the ethnically mixed rebellious towns in the Byzantine *thema* (administrative unit) Paristrion in the lower Danube, established after the fall of the First Bulgarian Kingdom. What Iorga called “crystallizations” and “organizations” Bănescu termed “little political organizations,” “little states” and “the first Romanian political organizations” (in the eleventh century), preceding the formation of the Romanian principalities in the thirteenth century. They had their own chiefs with Romanian and Slavonic names, such as Tatos, Sestlav (or Sethslav) and Sacea (or Satzas), who were the first Romanian *voivods*.⁸³

Mutaŋchiev began his critique of Bănescu's views by showing that the Danubian towns in Paristrion could not have been autonomous from Byzantium and tolerated by it except in circumstances of revolt (but then they would not be part of Byzantium and protected by it). Furthermore, Mutaŋchiev said, their leaders and population were not Romanians but mostly Pechenegs, partly Uz, Cumans, Russians, Magyars and others.⁸⁴ But he went too far in the other direction in asserting without substantiation that the “local population” (mentioned by Attaliates and Anna Komnene) was primarily Bulgarian, “which during the era in question as well formed the most numerous element of the population of the Danubian towns.”⁸⁵

Forced to defend his position (from Mutaŋchiev and from a critique by J. Breteaux⁸⁶), Bănescu backed down by conceding that “state organization” was too strong an expression for the fortified towns on the Danube (mainly Durostorum—today's Silistra, as well as Vicina in the delta) with their mixed element and downgraded the “states” to “autonomous communes.” However, he still insisted that the “autochthonous element” was Romanian and that it

83 Nicolae Bănescu, *Historical Survey of the Romanian People* (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1926), 11; Bănescu, “Les premiers témoignages,” 288–289, 297, 304, 310; Bănescu, *La Romanité de la Dobroudja*, 14–15; Nicolae Bănescu, “Changements politiques dans les Balcanes après la conquête de l'empire bulgare de Samuel,” *Bulletin de la Section historique de Académie roumaine* 10 (1923), 67–68; Nicoae Bănescu, “La Roma nuova,” 584.

84 Mutaŋchiev, “Kăm vāprosa za bălgaro-rumānskite.” After describing Bănescu's views (35–44), Mutaŋchiev cites his arguments against them (44–56). Also P. Mutaŋčiev, “Zu den Themen Bulgarien und Paristrion,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 26 (1926), 250–251. As Mutaŋchiev pointed out, Bănescu was not the first to discover the existence of the two *themas*, Paristrion and Bulgaria, and he did not know the Russian scholar Nikolay Skabalanovich before him.

85 Mutaŋchiev, “Kăm vāprosa za bălgaro-rumānskite,” 54. He asserted the same on an *a priori* basis about the whole region between the Balkans and the Danube Delta, because this was the territory and centers of the former Bulgaria (55).

86 In *L'echos d'Orient* 27 (1924), 251.

predominated. As for the names Tatos, Sestlav and Satzas, he now said that names alone could not prove anything (and that leaders and their subject population may well have been of different ethnicity).⁸⁷

In fact, Bănescu's (and Iorga's) view that the formations in Paristrion were Romanian was criticized by Romanian authors as well. Philologists took issue with the interpretation of the name Tatos. The historian Constantin C. Giurescu thought the whole idea was a "mere conjecture" not supported by the sources. And C. Neșculescu stressed the mixed character of the population and made the stronger (because also nationalist) argument that one should not start Romanian national history with Pechenegs headed by Tatos.⁸⁸

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In turn, Bănescu entered a debate with the doyen of the Bulgarian medievalists, Zlatarski. He found fault with Zlatarski's opinion that *thema* Paristrion was established relatively late, in the second half of the eleventh century (more precisely in 1059), coupled with the idea that the integrity of the conquered Bulgarian kingdom was preserved for some time within Byzantium. Zlatarski even asserted that Basil II and the Bulgarians concluded a pact that guaranteed their former rights and customs in some kind of "internal self-government" by replacing only the chiefs of the army and the administration (and that the Bulgarian Church was conferred special privileges).⁸⁹ Minor points of Bănescu's debate with Zlatarski concerned the status of the administrative unit Paristrion (whether it was *thema*-*"katepanat"* subordinate to *thema* Bulgaria, i.e. Macedonia, or a full-fledged *thema*) and the origin of its

87 Bănescu, "Ein ethnographisches Problem," 298, 306.

88 Constantin Giurescu, "O noua sinteza a trecutului nostru," *Revista Istorică Română* 2, no. 2 (1932); C. Neșculescu, "Ipoteza formațiunilor politice române la Dunăre în sec. XI," *Revista Istorică Română* 7 (1937). Quoted in Gyóni, "Zur Frage der Rumänischen," 122–126.

89 Vasil Zlatarski, "Politicheskoto polozhenie na severna Bălgariya prez XI i XII vekove," *Izvestiya na Istoricheskoto druzhestvo v Sofia*, kniga 9 [book 9] (Sofia, 1929), 1–50, esp. 8–9, 10, 34; Vasil Zlatarski, "Ustroistvo Bolgarii i polozhenie bolgarskogo naroda v pervoe vremya posle pokoreniya ih Vasiliem II Bolgaroboytseyu," in Vasil Zlatarski, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1984), 120–140 (initially in *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, vol. 4 [Prague, 1931], 49–67), esp. 131 (on "internal self-government"). Almost identically in Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoriya na Bălgarskata dărzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 2 (Sofia, 1934, and reprints), 1–33, esp. 28 (on "internal self-government"). The first to point out the division of the Bulgarian lands into three *themas* (Paristrion, Bulgaria and Sirmium) was the Russian scholar Nikolay A. Skabalanovich, *Vizantijskoe gosudarstvo i tserkov' v XI veke* (St. Petersburg, 1884), esp. 225–227. Zlatarski was familiar with this work but nevertheless insisted on his view.

name (according to Zlatarski and Mutafchiev, it was from the old Bulgarian term *Podunavie*; according to Bănescu, the Slavs borrowed the name from the Goths, who took it from the Celts). In addition, Zlatarski insisted that toward the end of the eleventh century, the Byzantine domination over the region between the Danube and Haemus was only nominal; that the Byzantine troops left the region after 1049; and that the Bulgarian population there, supported by the mixed population of the Danubian towns and the Pechenegs in particular, was preparing to overthrow Byzantine rule.⁹⁰ In other words, the main rebellious element was the Bulgarians, not the Pechenegs.

However, Bănescu demonstrated that *thema* Paristrion was established much earlier, in 972 (soon after the victory of Ioan Tsimisces over Svyatoslav in 971). Consequently, Bănescu showed, the Bulgarian territorial unity so dear to Zlatarski was definitively broken by Basil II (the Bulgar-slayer) in 1018, when he conquered the remaining western part of the kingdom (namely, Samuil's state in Macedonia) and rearranged it into *thema* Bulgaria. He also contested Zlatarski's opinion that King Samuil reunited northeastern Bulgaria with Macedonia, thus temporarily restoring the entire First Bulgarian Kingdom.⁹¹

In fact, later Bulgarian scholars had to agree that the evidence shows an earlier formation of Paristrion than Zlatarski's dating and thus a division of the Bulgarian lands. Ivan Bozhilov and Vasil Gyuzelev (in a review of a book on Dobrudja by Ion Barnea and Ștefan Ștefanescu) dated the emergence of Paristrion to the 1020s.⁹² In a more recent work Ivan Bozhilov criticized Zlatarski's theory, "whose essence is the preservation of the integrity of the Bulgarian lands within the framework of the Byzantine provincial administration." However, he felt Bănescu's view went to the other extreme when placing the creation of Paristrion soon after the subjugation of the eastern part of Bulgaria by Ioan Tsimisces. He clarified the various administrative transformations in the name and the status of the Eastern lands during the first fifty years (971 until 1018, when the Western Bulgarian

90 Vasil Zlatarski, "Politicheskoto polozhenie," 4, 49–50. Interestingly, this view converges with that of Romanian nationalist authors concerning the "autonomy" of the region. However, those authors believed in Romanian "crystallizations."

91 Nicolae Bănescu, "La question du Paristrion ou conclusion d'un long débat," *Byzantion* 8, no. 1 (1933), 277–308, esp. 282–283, 288; Nicolae Bănescu, "Le theme Paristrion (Paradounavis). Les Origines. Le Nom," *Bulletin de la Section historique de l'Académie roumaine* 25, no. 2 (1944), 3–15. Bănescu reacted strongly against Zlatarski's "theory of the indivisibility of the Bulgarian territory" (5). On his debate with Zlatarski, see also Nicolae Bănescu, *Les duchés byzantins de Paristrion (Paradounavon) et de Bulgarie* (Bucharest, 1945), 10–12, 17–18, 21, 48–49, 54–55.

92 Ivan Bozhilov and Vasil Gyuzelev, "I. Barnea and Șt. Ștefanescu, Din istoria Dobrogei, Vol. III, București, 1971," *Istoricheski pregled* 28, no. 3 (1972), 115–125, esp. 120–121.

Kingdom was conquered by Basil II), emphasized Samuil's temporary liberation of the Eastern Bulgarian lands until 1000 and dated the establishment of *thema* Paristrion to the 1020s or the 1040s.⁹³ Yet what he contests is the emergence of the name "Paristrion" and the date this province turned into a full-fledged *thema*, not the fact that the Eastern Bulgarian lands were placed in a separate administrative unit soon after they were conquered.

Given the scarcity of sources on Byzantine rule, individual episodes have attracted a great deal of attention and have become the focus of interminable exegesis in order to support one's own views. The case of Anna Komnene's "Scythians" who crossed the Danube to settle in Paristrion was mentioned previously. Similarly, concerning the Vlachs that the Byzantine general Leo Vatatzes led with him against the Magyars in 1166 (according to Ioannes Kinnamos or Cinnamus), there has been considerable speculation over whether they were recruited from the Black Sea coast of Paristrion-Dobrudja (Bănescu) or around Haemus or else from Wallachia or Transylvania (as Zlatarski would like to have them—away from the Bulgarian lands⁹⁴) and more generally, from north or south of the Danube.⁹⁵ Another such case, mentioned by Anna Komnene, is the Vlach Pudil, who came to the camp of Alexios I Komnenos near Anhialo in 1094 (during his campaign against the Cumans) to tell him the Cumans had crossed onto Byzantine territory.⁹⁶ Finally, there is the episode recorded by Nicetas Choniates about Andronikos I Komnenos, the future emperor, who fled but was captured in 1165 in Galicia by Vlachs.⁹⁷

93 Ivan Bozhilov and Vasil Gyuzelev, *Istoriya na srednovekovna Bălgariya VII–XIV vek* (Sofia: Anubis, 1999), 341–364 (chapter by Ivan Bozhilov), citation on 341.

94 Vasil Zlatarski, "Politicheskoto polozhenie," 47–48. In his biased way Zlatarski emphasizes that they were a mob. He suggests that Vatatzes took them so they would show him the ways through the mountains, and so they would not oppose him, but he says Vatatzes did not intend for them to take part in regular warfare, of which (says Zlatarski) they were incapable.

95 About the various opinions on their location, see Petre Diaconu, *Les Cumans au Bas-Danube aux XI^e et XII^e siècles* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei republicii socialiste România, 1978), 102–107. The adherents of the "south of the Danube" thesis (in various versions) included B. Hasdeu, N. Bănescu, V. Cîmpina, I. Barnea, C. Daicoviciu, H. Mihăescu and E. Stănescu and the non-Romanians R. Roesler, F. Chalandon, G. Moravcsik and G. Litavrin. Those who believed in the "north of the Danube" thesis included D. Onciul, N. Iorga, L. Pič, W. Tomaschek and V. Zlatarski. According to Petre Diaconu—pushing the debate to the point of absurdity—they were recruited partly south of the Danube and partly north of the Danube.

96 *Istoriya na Dobrudja*, vol. 2 (*Srednovekovie*) (Veliko Tărnovo: Faber, 2004), 161–175 (chapter by Ivan Bozhilov), esp. 172–174.

97 About the various opinions on their location, see the previous footnote and Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova, *Dolni Dunav granichna zona na vizantiyskiya zapad* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BAN, 1976), 104–106.

Obviously the issue in all these cases was the Vlachs' location and their presence in or absence from a certain area. A rare mention in a certain source is extrapolated to support a whole (imaginary) picture of the state of affairs.

Zlatarski also took a position (in 1933) on the question of the descent of the Assenids and the role of the Vlachs in the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. He considered their origin to be Cuman with a Slav (Bulgarian) admixture. He invented a whole story of their supposed kinship relations with a certain Boril, who (along with another person named German) rose from a servile position to become a favorite of the Byzantine Emperor Nicephoros Votaniates (1078–1081).⁹⁸ Zlatarski also de-emphasized the Vlachs' role in the uprising (though unlike Mutafchiev, he did not reject it altogether) by interpreting the Vlachs (and the Moesians) of Nicetas Choniates as actually Bulgarians or mostly representing Bulgarians. Yet he rejected the opinion of the Russian scholar Fyodor Uspensky (or Uspenskiy) that the Byzantine authors of the era avoided the name "Bulgarian" for political reasons. Instead he maintained that after the Western Bulgarian lands (Macedonia) became *thema* Bulgaria and the lands between the Danube and Haemus acquired the ancient name Moesia towards the middle of the twelfth century, Bulgarians from the latter part were called Moesians (and some of them were called Vlachs) in order to distinguish them from the Bulgarians in *thema* Bulgaria.⁹⁹ According to Zlatarski, another reason why Nicetas Choniates called the Bulgarians Vlachs was the "deep disdain" he felt toward them—the Vlachs being (with reference to Kekaumenos or Latinized Cecaumenos) "at the time the most despised people, of the lowest morality," who spread throughout the Balkans and "plundered and harassed the peaceful population."¹⁰⁰ There is the additional argument by Zlatarski

98 Vasil Zlatarski, "Potekloto na Petăr i Asen, vodachite na västaniето v 1185 g.," in Vasil Zlatarski, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, vol. 2, 326–358 (first published in *Spisanie na Bălgarskata akademiya na naukite*, kniga 45 [book 45], 1933, 7–48), esp. 334–337. Zlatarski (and Mutafchiev) borrowed the idea of Cuman-Slav or Cuman-Russian origins from Fyodor Uspensky.

99 Zlatarski, "Potekloto na Petăr i Asen," 340–347; the above interpretation is on 345. Still, Zlatarski acknowledges the mixed ethnic composition of Northern Bulgaria, including Vlachs (348). See also Zlatarski, *Istoriya na bălgarskata dărzhava*, vol. 2, 413–429. To diminish the role of the Vlachs, Zlatarski points to their initial hesitation to take part in the uprising, while the Bulgarians, according to him (not based on sources), showed a readiness to fulfill their "fatherland's duty" (427). Zlatarski adds an *a priori* statement that the very thought of an uprising could occur only to Bulgarian local notables or *voivods*, not to the nomadic Vlachs, who he says were at a low level of cultural development and did not have a notion of statehood (421–422).

100 Zlatarski, "Potekloto na Petăr i Asen," citation 345 and 346. Similarly about the bad "nature" of the Vlachs, see Zlatarski, *Istoriya na bălgarskata dărzhava*, vol. 2, 418, 422,

that Peter and Asen did not object to being called kings of the Vlachs and the Bulgarians by the Crusaders of the Third Crusade of 1187–1195 that passed through their lands (as evidenced by the Austrian cleric Ansbert) “because they wanted to keep the Vlachs on their side in view of their unreliable and deceitful character.” Moreover, Peter hoped to obtain recognition of his royal title from Frederick Barbarossa, the leader of the Third Crusade, by claiming to be of Roman descent (making use of the contemporary belief that the Vlachs were of Roman descent). Similarly the third brother, Kaloyan (Ioannitsa), in his letters to Pope Innocent III, titled himself “imperator Bulgarorum et Blachorum” for political reasons: he wanted to pass as Roman by descent and thus obtain the coveted title of emperor from the pope.¹⁰¹ One can see all the efforts and the casuistry deployed to discredit the direct mention or inference from the contemporary Greek and Latin sources of Vlach descent of the leaders of the successful uprising and founders of the Second Bulgarian State.

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The third significant Bulgarian medievalist of the pre-communist era, Petăr Nikov, shared Zlatarski's view that the Assenids were of Cuman-Bulgarian descent (even though Nikov did not study the matter in detail).¹⁰² He offered a strongly nationalistic account of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, phrased in the following way: it freed the South Slavs from Byzantium and restored the Bulgarian state in its ethnographic boundaries with Bulgarians as the “main and basic ethnographic element,” it realized a “Bulgarian national program”; it was the victory and triumph of the “Bulgarian idea” embodied in the Bulgarian kingdom and the Bulgarian tradition; and it consolidated the rule in Macedonia as part of the national program.¹⁰³ Nikov joined in the debate by writing a review of Constantin Giurescu's *History of the Romanians*. In it he praised Giurescu (from the University of Bucharest) as representative of the younger and more critical generation of Romanian historians and for acknowledging strong Bulgarian influences (such as Cyrillic script and many elements of state organization). But he contested Giurescu's view that Asen,

427–429 (treacherous, deceitful, culturally unsophisticated, engaged in sheep-breeding and robbery, etc.).

101 Zlatarski, “Potekloto na Petăr i Asen,” 348–351, citation on 348.

102 Petăr Nikov, *Osnovavane na Vtoroto bălgarsko tsarstvo 1186–1396* (Sofia: Istoricheskoto druzhestvo, 1937), 21–29. Nikov acknowledges that the brothers appealed to both Bulgarians and Vlachs in the uprising.

103 Ibid., 6–7, 14, 24, 28, 32, 36, 38, 42, 45, 47.

Peter and Kaloyan were Vlachs (on the grounds that the sources were not so clear and explicit and that Asen was a Cuman name), yet again praised him for acknowledging the swift Bulgarianization of the state as a result of the Bulgarian political and church tradition that they continued.¹⁰⁴ As one can see, hardly any book on the subject by a Romanian author passed unnoticed or failed to provoke a response.

Also worth mentioning is the younger Bulgarian medievalist and Byzantinist of the era Ivan Duychev (who would become the most authoritative medievalist under communism), who in 1942 endorsed Zlatarski's opinion about the confusion of the names in Choniates and his referring to the Bulgarians from northern Bulgaria as "Moesians" and Vlachs. According to Duychev (siding with Mutafchiev), the Second Bulgarian Kingdom was restored by Bulgarians alone.¹⁰⁵ Years later he wrote that the brothers were "probably" landowners in the Haemus highlands and that they were "probably" of Cuman ancestry on their mother's side.¹⁰⁶

It should be noted that Bulgarian scholars typically consider the name Asen (Asan, also called Belgun in King Boril's *Synodicon*) to be Turkic ("Turanian"),¹⁰⁷ while Peter and Kaloyan/Ionnitsa and Ivanko (their cousin, and the

104 Petăr Nikov, "Constantin C. Giurescu, Istoria Românilor. Bucuresti, 1935," *Izvestiya na Istoricheskoto druzhestvo v Sofia* 14–15 (1937), 243–246.

105 Ivan Duychev, "Prepiskata na papa Inokentiy III s bălgarite," *Godishnik na Universiteta "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," Istoriko-filologicheski fakultet*, vol. 38, kniga 3 [book 3], 1942, 3–116, esp. 85–86. The correspondence in English translation: "Correspondence between Pope Innocent III and Tsar Kalojan," in *Monumenta Bulgarica: A Bilingual Anthology of Bulgarian Texts from the 9th to the 19th Centuries*, trans. Thomas Butler (Michigan Slavic Publications, 1996), 217–233.

106 Ivan Duychev, "Văstanieto v 1185 g. i negovata hronologiya," in Ivan Duychev, *Prouchvaniya vărhu srednovekovnata bălgarska istoriya i kultura* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1981), 38–67 (first published in *Izvestiya na Instituta za bălgarska istoriya* 6 [1956], 327–358), esp. 50. Duychev admits that this question is not resolved. See also Ivan Duychev, "Vărhu nyakoi bălgarski imena i dumi u vizantiyskite avtori," in Ivan Duychev, *Prouchvaniya vărhu srednovekovnata*, 337–342, esp. 340–341. According to Duychev the name "Asan" in the Byzantine sources is "probably of Cuman origin."

107 Beginning with the renowned philologist Stefan Mladenov, "Poteklo i săstav na sredno-bălgarskoto Belgoun, pryakor na tsar Asenya I," *Spisanie na BAN* 45 (1933), 49–66, esp. 66. According to Mladenov, the word Belgun is Turkic, and it can equally be of Bulgar origin or a Cuman name. In recent times, see, similarly, Tzvetana Tafradzhiyska, "Kăm vāprosa za etnogenezisa na prabălgarite," in *Bălgarsko Srednovekovie. Bălgaro-săvetski sbornik v chest na 70-godishninata na prof. Ivan Duychev* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1980), 43–51, esp. 46.

murderer of Asen) are considered Slavic names.¹⁰⁸ The Bulgarians were playing the onomastics game (about origins of names) here. The Romanian scholars based their argument on the presumably Vlach language Asen spoke with a certain prisoner priest according to Choniates (see the beginning of the chapter).

For the sake of comprehensiveness, one should mention the hypothesis of the brothers' Bulgar origin from the rulers of the First Bulgarian Kingdom (long since rejected), based on a literal reading of Kaloyan's claim in his correspondence with Pope Innocent III (more about this later).¹⁰⁹

The Bulgarian authors explicitly point out that the brothers, regardless of their ancestry, were born and raised in a Bulgarian milieu and thus absorbed Bulgarian memories and state traditions (similar to other Bulgarian tsars of Cuman origin, such as the Terter and Shishman dynasties).

In a 1943 work Bănescu took issue with the views of Mutaſchiev, Zlatarski and Ivan Duychev (and of some non-Bulgarian Slav scholars) regarding the creation and the character of the Second Bulgarian Empire and the role of Vlachs in it.¹¹⁰ He objected to the minimizing and even discounting of the Vlachs' role in the uprising against Byzantium, which contradicted the contemporary sources (especially the basic source Nicetas Choniates, but also later Western Latin sources such as Villehardouin and Robert de Clari or Clary of the Fourth Crusade). He is especially critical of Mutaſchiev's artificial and conjectural constructions to prove that the leaders of the uprising, Peter and Asen/Asan, were of "Russo-Cuman" origin, and he likewise criticizes Zlatarski's

108 For example, by Genoveva Tsankova-Petkova, *Bălgariya pri Asenevtsi* (Sofia: Narodna prosveta, 1978), 23. From their names Tsankova-Petkova argues the brothers are of Bulgarian origin.

109 It was expressed for the first time by the monk Paisiy of Hilendar in his Romantic *Istoriya Slavyanobolgarskaya* in 1762 and was also expounded by the Bulgarian man of letters and national revolutionary Georgy Rakovski. In the professional historiography it was taken up by the Russian scholar Vasilii G. Vasilevskiy, "Kriticheskie i bibliograficheskie zametki. Obrazovanie vtorogo bolgarskago tsarstva Feodora Uspenskago, Odessa, 1879," *Zhurnal' ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniya*, no. 204 (1879), 144–217, 318–348, esp. 179–181. Later on it was advocated by Vsevolod Nikolaev, "Potekloto na Asenevtsi i etnicheskiya harakter na osnovanata ot tyah dărzhava" (Sofia, 1944), 35, 64–65, 82, 126–127. Curiously, Nikolaev accepted also the other assertions in the correspondence of Kaloyan with Pope Innocent III that the Assenids were related to the Romans/Vlachs. This was criticized in a review by Dimităr Angelov, "Potekloto na Asenevtsi i etnicheskiya harakter na osnovanata ot tiah dărzhava ot prof. Vsevolod Nikolaev, Sofia, 1944," *Istoriчески pregled* 3, no. 3 (1946–1947), 374–383.

110 Nicolae Bănescu, *Un problème d'histoire médiévale. Création et caractère du second empire bulgare* (185) (Bucharest: Cartea Romanească, 1943), esp. 34–78.

attempts to prove their Cuman origin.¹¹¹ He also took issue with the Bulgarian scholars' attempts to downplay the Vlach ethnonym so often mentioned in the contemporary sources. As Bănescu notes, this was done in two ways. One was to interpret "Moesi" (inhabitants of the region of Moesia) from the sources to stand for both Vlachs and Bulgarians or just for Bulgarians from the northeast, arguably in order to differentiate them from the Bulgarians of *thema* Bulgaria (meaning Macedonia) in the southwest.¹¹² The other—especially radical—way was to resort to the idea (first expressed by the Russian scholar Uspenskiy) that the Byzantine authors of the period intentionally avoided the Bulgarian ethnonym for political reasons (so as not to remind them of their independent past). Instead, Bănescu subscribed to the view of the Austrian historian Constantine R. von Höfler that the Vlach-Bulgarian state was created by the Romanians (by a Vlach dynasty) along the lines of the older Bulgarian imperial traditions.¹¹³ An especially painful blow for the Bulgarians was Bănescu's interpretation (after Iorga) that the state could be set up only in a Bulgarian "form" because of the existence of a state tradition and the enmity with Byzantium (in other words, that the "form" might have been Bulgarian, but the ethnic content or substance was Romanian).¹¹⁴

The role of the Vlachs in the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (and in the first one) is taken to extremes in George Murnu's interpretation (in 1938), again openly contradicting the Bulgarian historians (mostly Zlatarski). His interpretation is noteworthy for the idea (not supported by the sources) of a peaceful and friendly coexistence between Bulgarians and Vlachs that started with the founding of the First Bulgarian Kingdom (in which the Vlachs presumably enjoyed autonomy), continued through the joint endurance of Byzantine rule and culminated in the common struggles against it that resulted in the founding of the second Bulgarian state.¹¹⁵ Here is Murnu's narrative in some detail. The Romanians lived under the rule of the Bulgarian "barbarians" of the First Kingdom in "a certain decentralization of a feudal character or local autonomy" on territories with heterogeneous population (including Albanians and Serbs); their autonomy and self-government were preserved in exchange for their support for the Bulgarian *khans* and for joining their armies. This

111 Ibid., 43.

112 Ibid., 68. As Bănescu asserted: "For the Byzantines the Bulgarians in either province were Bulgarians."

113 Ibid., 84–93.

114 Ibid., esp. 24–25, 93.

115 George Murnu, "Les Romains de la Bulgarie médiévale," *Balkanica* 1 (1938), 1–21. The idea of co-existence and collaboration was first formulated in George Murnu, *Rumänische Wörter im Neugriechischen* (Munich, 1902), 6.

system not only made possible the Bulgars' hegemony but became the basis of a dualist accord between Bulgarians and Vlachs that maintained itself "forever" (*"leur dualisme d'entente perpétuelle"*).¹¹⁶ In Murnu's view the Vlachs were not just isolated enclaves or oases (as presented in theories of their "nomadic" existence) but significant masses, very conservative and enduring, well organized in "autonomous organisms" with self-government under their own chiefs. They inhabited various places in the Balkans, including the mountains of Eastern Bulgaria, the Balkan range and the Rhodope Mountains.¹¹⁷ The fall of the First Bulgarian Kingdom changed the situation in favor of the Romanians. Slavo-Bulgarian vigor, force and heroism were spent even before Basil II, the Bulgar-slayer, crushed them forever. Then the Vlachs stepped forward to take a central role (as seen in the frequent mention of their name in the sources). In launching the revolt in the name of both Vlachs and Bulgarians, the Vlach chiefs Peter and Asen did not want to radically change "the Bulgarian-Vlach past" and to set up "a national Vlach government" but strove to resurrect the old Bulgarian state, "i.e., the sacred tradition of indissoluble union between Bulgarians and Vlachs." The establishment of the state was "due exclusively to Romanian will, intelligence and energy," and it was able to flourish only in the first period, "when it was carried on the shoulders of these Atlantes, the Asanides." The subsequent Bulgarian kings were of foreign origin and mediocre, and the kingdom was "Bulgarianized" due mostly to the political and ecclesiastical traditions. Most of the Romanians then crossed the Danube, "obeying an infallible instinct for the preservation of their ethnicity," and united there with the central Romanian forces, which had occupied the Carpathians and were now free to populate the former (Roman) Dacia after the Asiatic "barbarians" departed from it in the mid-thirteenth century.¹¹⁸ The author—an Aromanian (Vlach) from Greece—thus claims not only a Bulgarian-Romanian symbiosis and the preponderance of the Vlachs in the establishment of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, but also (contrary to the views of many Romanian historians) an important role for the Balkan Vlachs in Romanian history.

Another author who entered the debate with Mutaſchiev was Gheorghe I. Brătianu. In a 1937 work, he advocated a variant of the continuity theory of the origin of the Romanians, which was at odds with Mutaſchiev's assertion that Romanized Dacians did not remain north of the Danube after the third century and that the Romanians were preserved in the Western Balkans (Roesler's theory) and later migrated in various directions. According to Brătianu this

116 George Murnu, "Les Romains de la Bulgarie," 9–12, 19–20, citation on 19 and 20.

117 Ibid., 12–16.

118 Ibid., citation on 17, 20 and 21.

creates the paradox that the Romanian people “has no history, no origin and no fatherland.”¹¹⁹ The interesting thing here is the explanation for why the name “Romanian” does not appear in the sources until the tenth century. In his view this “silence” is due to the fact that the Romanians did not differ in name (*romăni*) from the Byzantine population of “Romaioi,” so there was no reason to mention them specifically (“Vlach” was a later name given by the Slavs to the Romanian shepherds). He also argued that the ethnic names used in the Balkan Middle Ages were either geographical (after the name of the land) or political—after the political masters or suzerains, of which the Vlachs were subjects. Thus the fact that they were not mentioned does not mean that they did not exist (and the argument *ex silentio* is not valid).¹²⁰ According to Brătianu, the Balkan Vlachs deserve credit for the Assenids’ revolt and their state, while the Bulgarians’ role was secondary (“the first Romanian political creation of the Middle Ages, the empire of the Vlachs and Bulgarians”). However, he says, the state became increasingly Slavo-Bulgarian in spirit, and tradition developed in the rivalry with Byzantium.¹²¹

On the other hand, Brătianu recognized the existence of Slavo-Romanian *voivodships* (or princedoms—*knyazestva*)—of Gelou, Glad and Menumurut,—north of the Danube in Transylvania and Banat since the ninth century that were closely tied to the Bulgarian Empire. These *voivodships* freed themselves from Bulgarian tutelage after the fall of the Bulgarian kingdom, fought the Hungarians and were subjugated by them. Brătianu also mentions the *voivodships* of Litovoi on the right side of the Olt River and of Seneslav in Wallachia during the thirteenth century (from Hungarian sources)—already

119 Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Une énigme et un miracle historique: le peuple roumain* (Bucharest, 1937), 27–36, citation on 34. In Brătianu’s own view the Romanians originated as a people in Dacia but were in contact with the Romanized population in the Balkans (i.e., south of the Danube), and there was a constant movement of population across the Danube. He also thought that the Slav invasion displaced the Romanians’ center of gravity to the north of the Danube and to the Carpathians, while some of the Romanized population migrated to the southwest and northeast Balkans (57–60, 123–124). See also his later and more elaborated and somewhat modified work: Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Origines et formation de l’unité roumaine* (Bucharest: Institut d’histoire universelle “N. Iorga,” 1943), 94, 100, 106, 110. In Brătianu’s opinion the Romanians constantly mixed with Slavs in Transylvania and the Banat, but no migration from the Balkans occurred.

120 Brătianu, *Une énigme et un miracle*, 80, 84–85, 87–88, 90, 92, 100, 126.

121 This is especially emphasized in Brătianu, *Origines et formation*, 98–106, citation on 98. On the other hand, Brătianu rejects the idea that the chiefs in Dobruđa at the end of the eleventh century—Tatos, Sestslav and Satscha—were Romanian. According to him they were Pechenegs (110–111).

during the Second Bulgarian (Assenid) Kingdom—as a proof of continuing contacts between Slavs and Romanians. Moreover, he acknowledged the Bulgarian state's substantial influence on the Romanians in the liturgy and the Church organization, though more for the initial period before the Hungarian conquest and possibly during the rule of the Assenids in the first half of the thirteenth century (when models of civil administration and court titles were also adopted) rather than with the emergence of Romanian states in the fourteenth century (when direct Byzantine influence prevailed).¹²²

Here we touched upon two other issues that came up in the debates, namely whether the Bulgarian states extended across the Danube on what is today Romanian territory (and when) and what their influence was on those who would become the Romanians. In this it was the Bulgarian scholars who took the offensive, attempting to counterbalance the Romanian historical claims and the loss of Dobrudja (as well as, between 1913 and 1940, Southern Dobrudja). Historical truth notwithstanding, here we can detect a form of cultural, if not political, “imperialism” through history manifested in the very phrasing and the verve of the debates. To this we turn now, though briefly.

Bulgarian Rule and Influences on the Medieval Romanians

The Bulgarian scholars agree concerning the spread of the First Bulgarian Kingdom north of the Danube and especially in Wallachia and Transylvania. For most of the time, this state had its “Trans-Danubian Bulgaria” (where Khan Krum settled captives from Byzantium, according to the Scriptor Incertus).¹²³

There is less agreement concerning the Second Bulgarian Kingdom of the Assenids because of the Magyar expansion starting at the end of the tenth century. Subsequently there was also the transient, but devastating, Tartar rule: after a short incursion by Khan Batu in 1242–1243, Khan Nogai crossed the Danube in 1265, subjugated Bulgaria, and invaded Hungary in 1285. The might of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom in general fluctuated dramatically, yet the

122 Brătianu, *Une énigme et un miracle*, 104–108; Brătianu, *Origines et formation*, 96, 106–107.

123 Zlatarski, *Istoriya na bălgarskata dărzhava*, vol. 1, part 1, 248. Khan Krum conquered Eastern Hungary and Transylvania from the Avars and thus reached the Frankish state. Also Mutafchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 158–159, 166; Petăr Mutafchiev, “Sădbinite na sred-novekovniya,” 196. According to Mutafchiev, under Khan Krum and King Boris I (in the ninth century), Bulgarians ruled over all of Greater Romania, from Tissa in the west to Durostorum in the east and to the Northern Transylvanian Alps in the north. In the previously mentioned work he was vaguer, referring only to the lands north of the Danube.

Bulgarian authors did their best to demonstrate various forms of its political and cultural influence across the Danube.

Zlatarski asserted that the Vlachs (and Orthodox Slavs) from Transylvania migrated, starting in the 1230s, under the pressure of the Magyar king Béla IV (and the pressure to convert to Catholicism) to Bulgarian territories north of the Danube in Oltenia in today's western Wallachia, with the permission and under the protection of the Bulgarian kings. There they established their *voivodships* in the 1230s or 1240s (Litovoi on the right bank and Seneslav on the left bank of the Olt River), with Bulgarian administrative and legal arrangements and Bulgarian as the official language and came under the jurisdiction of the Târnovo Patriarchy with a Slavonic sermon. That is why the Magyar kings established the Banat of Severin (in Eastern Banat and Western Oltenia) in 1228 and led wars against Bulgaria for taking the lands north of the Danube and subjugating the Vlach *voivodships*.¹²⁴ According to Mutaŋchiev, Bulgarians living across the Danube supplied the cultural leaders and probably the political leaders of the Vlach kingdom that was created around the mid-thirteenth century, and the whole Vlach literature was not only in Cyrillic, but in the Bulgarian language proper for centuries afterwards.¹²⁵ Yet Mutaŋchiev did not claim political domination of the second Bulgarian state across the Danube even during the rule of its greatest king, Ivan Asen II (except "perhaps" for Western Wallachia).¹²⁶

A number of Romanian historians, such as Onciul, Xénopol, Giurescu, Panaiteŋcu and Densuŋianu, also think that the first Bulgarian state extended north of the Danube.¹²⁷ As Lucian Boia perceptively noted, the admission that the Bulgarians dominated the Romanians north of the Danube during the First Bulgarian Kingdom is connected with the continuity theory and with Romanian nationalism, for instance, with Xénopol (and with other authors).¹²⁸ The domination actually presupposes that Romanians were there all the time, or in any case, at the time the Magyars arrived. Fighting Magyar nationalism

124 Zlatarski, *Istoriya na bălgarskata dărzhava*, vol. 3, 373–376, 490–492.

125 Mutaŋchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya narod*, 26.

126 Mutaŋchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 147. The book was written in 1928–1936 but published only posthumously in 1987. As Mutaŋchiev pointed out in the same place, Bulgaria lost most of its trans-Danubian lands (populated with "Bulgarian Slavs") as early as the reign of Simeon (893–927).

127 Xénopol, *Histoire des roumains*, 145, 148–155; Dimitrie Onciul, *Originile principatelor române* (Bucharest, 1899), 16, 18–19.

128 Boia, *History and Myth*, 116. The idea that the Romanians were there at the arrival of the Hungarians in 898 and have never left their ancient homeland is very clearly stated by Xénopol, *Histoire des roumains*, 153.

was more important for the Romanian nationalist historians, at least until the end of World War I, than counteracting Bulgarian nationalism. Things changed after World War I, when Romania gained Transylvania and Romanian nationalism started trying to play a more active role south of the Danube, taking up the defense of the Vlach minorities. To understand the Romanian-Bulgarian debate, one should thus look beyond it to the Romanian national objectives and priorities at a certain moment and to the particular theory of origins advocated by a certain Romanian author.

Among the Romanian scholars, Iorga (as we saw) denied a Bulgarian presence north of the Danube during the First Bulgarian Kingdom (except for the Onglos as a starting point of the movement of the “Turanian” Bulgars south of the Danube), while he stated that Dobrudja served as a “corridor” through which they passed but did not stay. Bănescu sought to refute the notion that the First Bulgarian Kingdom extended north of the Danube by trying to combat the established scholarly consensus (John Bury, Konstantin Jireček, Lubor Niederle, Fyodor Uspenskiy, William Miller and the Romanian historians Onciul, Xénopol, Giurescu, Panaitescu and Densușianu).¹²⁹ His conclusion reads:

The whole of Byzantine history registers the Bulgarian effort in the direction of the south and the west when there was an energetic chief, such as Krum and Simeon, that is, in the direction of Byzantium. No such effort has been registered across the Danube except for the western region and that of the delta of the river, a passageway of the barbarians. Neither Krum nor Asparuh or even the great tsar Simeon have ever been masters of Wallachia and Moldavia and still less of Transylvania.¹³⁰

As for the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, of the earlier Romanian authors only Dimitrie Onciul (in contrast with Xénopol) supported the view that the state of the Assenids comprised the territories north of the Danube as far as the Carpathians. He argued this by citing the Vlach part of the title of Peter and Asen (as rulers of Bulgaria and Vlachia) and of Kaloyan, as appropriated by later Bulgarian authors. He was also of the opinion that Wallachia originated

¹²⁹ Nicolae Bănescu, *L'ancien état bulgare et les pays roumains* (Bucharest, 1947), 9–56. Bănescu mentions the evidence in favor of Bulgarian domination and tries to invalidate it. Quite characteristically, he refers to a Bulgarian author—Dimităr Krändzhalov—to support the view that the trenches in Bessarabia were not Bulgarian but Roman (33–34).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

from the breaking away of the *voevodship* Muntenia from the Assenid kingdom (after the death of tsar Ivan Asen II and the Tartar invasion in 1241).¹³¹

Iorga, on the other hand, rejected the idea that the Second Bulgarian Kingdom extended north of the Danube (as was mentioned). Bănescu acknowledged the cultural and religious influence of the second Bulgarian state over the Romanians north of the Danube (in their common struggles against Byzantium) but rejected any political domination. In his view, what Choniates referred to as “Vlachia” was the land where the rebellion started, meaning Bulgaria between the Danube and Haemus.¹³² We will come back to these questions in a new context later.

Bulgarian cultural influence upon the Romanians is a separate issue. It seems “softer” and more tractable than political issues of statehood and territory. Yet there were major debates on this as well, in which Bulgarian scholars pointed to a substantial Bulgarian impact upon the Romanians (whose states emerged quite late), while some Romanian scholars denied or downplayed it. Obviously nothing was of minor importance when it came to national pride, but moreover, “influence” was often conflated with a role in the ethnogenesis, especially because Slavs and Romanians had lived in close proximity north of the Danube. Here I can only briefly touch upon this topic, which branched off into various spheres (language and script, literature, Church and state affairs, etc.), epochs (earlier and later influences, the persistence of earlier ones later on) and channels (direct or indirect, from close or from afar), not to speak of the unresolvable and ever-contentious question of ethnic composition.

The Romanian position varied on the cultural influences and, often thought to be connected with this, the Slav “factor” in the Romanian ethnogenesis. The Transylvanian (Latinist) school discounted or drastically minimized any Slavic

131 Onciul, *Originele principatelor*, 27–46. Quoted in Borislav Primov, “Săzdavaneto na Vtorata bălgarska dărzhava i uchastieto na vlasite,” *Bălgaro-rumănski vrăzki i otnosheniya prez vekovete. Izsledvaniya*, vol. 1 (XII–XIX v.) (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BAN, 1963), 9–54, esp. 46.

132 Bănescu, *L'ancien état bulgare*, 57–58, 60–61. Bănescu argues this based on the title “King of Vlachia” that the Latin historiographer Villehardouin sometimes uses for Kaloyan/Ioanitsa (in addition to “King of Vlachia and Bulgaria”). Another relevant source is the mid-thirteenth-century Franciscan traveler William Rubruck, who located Vlachia as being between the Danube and the Balkan mountains (Haemus). This was emphasized by C. Brătescu, “Nume vechi ale Dobrogi: Vlachia lui Asan, Vlachia Alba,” *Archiva Dobrogei* 2 (1919), 18–31. See also Aurélien Sacerdoțeanu, *Guillaume de Rubrouck et les roumains au milieu du XIII siècle* (Paris, 1930). Both are quoted in Robert Lee Wolff, “The ‘Second Bulgarian Empire,’ Its Origin and History to 1204,” *Speculum* 24, no. 2 (1949), 167–206, esp. 181.

influence and role in the ethnogenesis in favor of the idea of purely Roman origins. The philologist Bogdan Hasdeu (1838–1907), the first Romanian Slavist, acknowledged the influx of Slavic words in the Romanian language as well as the political, religious and cultural links since the seventh century. However, he did not believe the Slavs participated in the Romanian “synthesis” (which he thought was already accomplished by the time the Slavs came). A certain rehabilitation of the Slav ethnic component and influence came from the Junimists (an intellectual and cultural conservative current) in the late nineteenth century in reaction to Latinism and as an attempt to temper nationalism. In his *Etymological Dictionary* (1870–1879), Alexandru Cihac concluded that the Romanian language was two-fifths Slav in its lexical base and just one-fifth Latin (as well as one-fifth Turkish). Bogdan Hasdeu then advanced his theory of the “circulation of words,” arguing that influence depends not on the mere number of words in dictionaries but on those in actual circulation—in this case, a much smaller number, thus downplaying the Slavic linguistic influence. Alexandru D. Xénopol (1847–1920) and Dimitrie Onciul (1856–1923) went further in emphasizing the Slavic component in the Romanian synthesis, while Ioan Bogdan (1864–1919) went the furthest.¹³³ To quote Bogdan:

The influence of the Slav element in the formation of our nation is so evident that we may say without exaggeration that we cannot even speak of a Romanian people before the absorption of Slav elements by the native Roman population in the course of the sixth to tenth centuries.¹³⁴

Bogdan also recognized an “enormous number” of Slavic words in the Romanian language, the use of the Slavic language in the church and the state and even in everyday life until the sixteenth or seventeenth century, and Slav origins or elements in almost all old Romanian state institutions. Quite offensively to Romanian nationalism, he noted that while the Romanians “were increasingly abandoning Roman culture and becoming savage,” the Bulgarians, “who came over us as barbarians, took from their Byzantine neighbors, under the protective wings of an organized and powerful state, a civilization that was

133 Ioan Bogdan, *Luptele românilor cu turcii până la Mihai Viteazul. Cultura veche română* (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Socecă, 1898), 5–8. The introductory part is a very modest description of the Romanian past until the fifteenth century. According to Bogdan, the Romanian voevodships were vassals to the First and the Second Bulgarian Empires. About this, see Boia, *History and Myth*, 106–108.

134 Ioan Bogdan, *Istoriografia română și problemele ei actuale* (Bucharest, 1905), 21. Quoted in Boia, *History and Myth*, 107.

then advanced, that of Byzantium, which was none other than the continuation, in a Greek form with Oriental influences, of the old Roman civilization."¹³⁵ Ironically, here it is the Bulgarians who appropriate via Byzantium the much-vaunted Roman civilization, while the Romanians drift away from it.

In a similar vein, the philologist Ovid Densușianu (1873–1938) held that the Balkan Roman language became Romanian starting from the time of the Slavic invasion. To quote him:

It is to the common life with the Bulgarians that the Romanians owe their medieval civilization. In their political and church organization, one can detect Bulgarian influence at every step; it is again from the Bulgarians that their first literary culture came.¹³⁶

Romanian authors of the later nationalistic generations were less prone to acknowledge Bulgarian cultural influences. Iorga's rejection of Bulgarian domination north of the Danube went hand-in-hand with his insistence that Slav cultural (and ethnogenetic) influence was limited. Bănescu (siding with Iorga) also rejected the idea that the Slav Church ritual was introduced among the Romanians during the First Bulgarian Kingdom and maintained that this happened during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom in the absence of a Patriarchy of Constantinople (under Latin rule from 1204 to 1261).¹³⁷ In general the nationalist stand encouraged rejection of influences and insistence on originality. When influences were acknowledged at all, the nationalist historians wanted these to be indirect and refracted and to occur from a distance and without direct contact.

The Bulgarian scholars did not spare Romanian nationalist sensibilities. Here is the account of the Bulgarian philologist and historian Lyubomir Miletich (1863–1937)—a participant in the controversy, which explains the verve. The Bulgarian contributions he asserted include the influx of "Bulgarian Slavs" in the Romanian ethnogenesis north of the Danube and many traces of the Bulgarian (in fact, Slavic) language; the Bulgarians' political schooling of the Romanians, as attested to by the existence of Romanian-Bulgarian semi-autonomous vassal *voivodships* like that of Seneslav in Oltenia (western Wallachia) in the thirteenth century (claiming that it existed even in the eleventh and twelfth centuries); the "semi-Bulgarian character" of the

135 Ioan Bogdan, *Românii și bulgarii* (Bucharest, 1895), 15. Quoted in Boia, *History and Myth*, 107.

136 Densușianu, *Histoire de la langue roumaine*, vol. 1, 240–241, citation on 279.

137 Nicolae Bănescu, *L'ancien état bulgare*, 69–88.

Wallachian *voivodship* at the end of the thirteenth and in the first half of the fourteenth century, because the Bulgarian language served as official state and Church language and in spite of the Romanian dynasty from Transylvania; *voivod* Mircea (1386–1418) himself knew Bulgarian very well, and his (and his son's) charters are written in a proper Bulgarian language, and (according to Miletich's claim) like many Vlach *voivods* and notables at the time, they were "semi-Bulgarianized"; finally, the preservation of the Bulgarian ethnic element in Romania from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century as a living milieu to cultivate the Bulgarian language and script. The Slavic/Bulgarian influence upon the Romanian language is demonstrated in certain vocabulary used in the political, social and ecclesiastical organization (though there are also older Latin Christian terms as traces of earlier Christianization) and many other words in various spheres (agriculture, household, etc.). According to Miletich (debating with Bogdan, who maintained that Bulgarian influence lasted until the end of the First Bulgarian Kingdom but that its effects lasted until much later), Bulgarian cultural influence was continuous during the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms and continued after the fall of the latter under the Turks, when the most erudite Bulgarians emigrated to the Romanian lands (and to Russia). Thus Bulgarian culture and Slav Orthodoxy survived and flourished in Romania in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.¹³⁸ Not without pride, Miletich states that the Romanians became carriers of Bulgarian medieval culture and of the Bulgarian literary language, known as Middle Bulgarian, and that this "Vlach-Bulgarian cultural era" lasted until the seventeenth century. He debated the older Romanian authors on issues of lesser importance but agreed with most of their views and accused scholars of Iorga's generation of inflated national pride.

A "New School" of Romanian historians critical of Iorga and taking Ioan Bogdan as a model emerged in the 1930s, re-emphasizing the Slavic element (though not as strongly as Bogdan). Constantin C. Giurescu (1901–1977)

138 Lyubomir Miletich, "Bălgari i rumăni v tehните kulturno-istoricheski otnosheniya," in *Dobrudzha. Geografīya, istoriya, etnografīya, stopansko i dărzavno-politicheskoye znachenie* (Sofia, 1918), 69–118. See also, in a more neutral tone, the Bulgarian linguist Benyu Tsonev, "Ezikovi vzaimnosti mezhdu bălgari i rumăni," *Godishnik na Sofiyiskiya universitet, Istoriko-filologicheski fakultet* 15–16 (1919–1920), 1–160, esp. 1–7. Tsonev asserts the considerable impact of the Bulgarian (Slavic) speech on the Romanians as well as the Bulgarian element in the Romanian ethnogenesis (including in late Ottoman times); as for the Bulgarian literary influence proper, he dates it from the fourteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, that is, with the intellectual emigration after the fall of the Bulgarians under the Ottomans. But he is primarily interested in the "linguistic mutualities" or "commonalities," whose origins are hard to ascertain.

and Petre P. Panaitescu (1900–1967) recognized many Slav elements in the Romanian language, culture and political organization, yet considered them secondary to the Daco-Roman base. According to Giurescu, “the Romanian people acquired its full composition, its complete ethnic character, only after the Slav element had been added to the *essential* Daco-Roman element, which is the *foundation*.”¹³⁹ He emphasized the brutal conquest (rather than peaceful settlement) of Dacia by the Slavs, while Panaitescu developed the theory that the Romanian boyar class was of Slav origin.¹⁴⁰ These authors continued their careers in the communist period.

Continuation Under Communism and Beyond

The Bulgarian-Romanian historiographical feud continued after World War II under the communist regimes. There was an initial “internationalist” (actually, Stalinist) phase in both countries during the 1950s when history was rewritten to give it a pro-Russian/Soviet slant. In both Romania and Bulgaria, the Slav influence was emphasized as much as possible. In the Romanian case it was at the expense of the Dacian and Latin element, while in the Bulgarian case it was at the expense of the Bulgar (Turkic) element. In Bulgaria even a scholar as sympathetic to Russia as Zlatarski came under attack for focusing too much on the Turkic Bulgars and for presenting them as the state-building element, which saved the amorphous Slavic masses from Byzantine rule and assimilation. Instead, the Slavs were portrayed as more culturally advanced (their tribal unions were treated as “states”), and the Bulgarian state was presented as a harmonious union between the two elements.¹⁴¹ In Romania the high regard for Slavic influence (especially political, less so ethnic and linguistic) peaked in Mihail Roller’s 1952 instructions for historical research (and subsequent textbook), in which the role of the Kievan state (and the Eastern Slavs) in the formation of

139 Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor*, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1946, 5th ed.), 260. Quoted in Boia, *History and Myth*, 108.

140 Boia, *History and Myth*, 108.

141 Tushe Vlahov, “Săstoyanie i zadachi na bălgarskata istoricheska nauka,” in *Sădăt nad istoritsite. Bălgarskata istoricheska nauka. Dokumenti i diskusii 1944–1950*, vol. 1, eds. Vera Mutafchieva and Vesela Chichovska (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo “Prof. Marin Drinov,” 1995), 211–213; Aleksandăr Burmov, “Săzdavane na bălgarskata dărzhava,” *Istoricheski pregled* 8, no. 1 (1951), 90–99; Aleksandăr Burmov, “Kăm vāprosa za otnosheniyata mezhdū slavyani i prabālgari prez VII–IX v.,” *Istoricheski pregled* 10, no. 1 (1954), 69–94.

the Romanian states took the main role and the influence of the southern Slavs was secondary. To quote it only concerning the Bulgarian influence:

The extension of the Bulgarian feudal state of the ninth and tenth centuries over the territory of our country is an indisputable fact and contributed to the development of the country. This influence of the southern Slavs completed that of the eastern Slavs, which preceded it and again followed it in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when part of the territory of our country was included in the *cnezate* of Halich.¹⁴²

The turn toward national communism in Romania that started in the 1960s was expressed by reducing Slav influence in the historiography and excluding the Slavs from the Romanian ethnogenesis. As Lucian Boia pointed out, this was done by shifting the ethnogenesis backwards to the era before the coming of the Slavs. The Romanian people thus appeared already formed and eventually adopted certain minor Slav elements.¹⁴³ In the Bulgarian case the “Slavicization” (solidly based on language) continued until the very end of the regime, though interest in the Turkic Bulgars grew in the 1980s (and mushroomed afterwards¹⁴⁴).

In the 1960s there were attempts at moderation, mediation and conciliation, probably still influenced by communist “internationalism” or, perhaps more to the point, by a projection of the principle of “non-interference” back into history, in the sense of limiting history to one’s present borders and excluding, or not insisting too much on, failed developments elsewhere. In the Romanian case this meant “renunciation of the Balkan space” (and less interest in the Balkan Romanity). In the Bulgarian case it meant renunciation of historical “imperialism” (which prides itself on medieval statehood and its territorial expansion), combined with an emphasis on positive aspects of relations with other ethnic groups.¹⁴⁵

142 Mihail Roller, “Cu privire la unele probleme din domeniul cercetărilor istorice,” *Studii. Revistă de istorie și filosofie* (July–September 1952), 152–153. Quoted in Boia, *History and Myth*, 109.

143 Boia, *History and Myth*, 109–110.

144 On that, see my ironic book: Roumen Daskalov, *Chudniyat syvat na drevnite bălgari* (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2011).

145 Boia, *History and Myth*, 121.

One such conciliatory attempt was made by the Bulgarian scholar Borislav Primov.¹⁴⁶ (Needless to say, mediation is not in itself a guarantee of historical verity). Here are his basic views that cover all points of the controversy. First (in between Iorga and Mutaſchiev), there were significant remnants of Romanized population in the Balkans and in Dacia across the Danube who survived the barbarian invasions and the settlement of the Slavs, mostly by withdrawing into the mountains; they were present at the origins of the later Romanians, even though they could not form a state until much later.

Second, the Vlachs had a considerable role in the uprising of Asen and Peter. However, it should be neither inflated (as it was by extremist Romanian authors) nor downplayed and negated (as it was by extremist Bulgarian authors). It was Vlachs both from the Haemus range and from across the Danube (depicted as allies, along with the Cumans) who took part in the liberation movement, while no Vlachs between the Danube and Haemus are registered in the sources (and only Iorga and Bănescu think there were). As for Choniates's use of the ethnonym "Vlach," Primov analyzes every single mention to arrive at the conclusion that in most cases it was correct, but there were cases of mixing, and in just one case can one clearly identify Bulgarians. This is when he says that the Byzantine emperor Isaac II Angelos (or Angelus), in his campaigns against the Vlachs, was accused of ignoring the advice of his predecessor Basil II (the Bulgar-slayer, who was actually acting against the Bulgarians).¹⁴⁷ Primov's conclusion is that it is wrong to assume Choniates was persistently incorrect and to thus correct each use of the term "Vlachs" in his account by substituting "Bulgarians." The role of the Vlachs is well attested to in the sources and by the appellation of the brothers Asen, Peter and Kaloyan as "Tsars of the Bulgarians and the Vlachs" or "of Bulgaria and Vlachia." Primov points out that the lands

146 Borislav Primov, "Săzdavaneto na Vtorata," 9–54. The author presents the views of many authors on both sides and explains his own position. See also his more narrative article: Borislav Primov, "Văzstanovyavaneto i ukrepvaneto na bălgarskata dărzhava i srednovekovna Evropa (kraya na XII–nachaloto na XIII v.)," *Istoricheski pregled* 35, no. 3 (1979), 3–22. Another example of a comparatively balanced presentation is Tăpkova-Zaimova, *Dolni Dunav*. Yet she avoids taking a stand concerning the origin of the Asenevtsi and says that they were "local people" (146–147). This line could not be crossed by the Bulgarian authors, however open-minded.

147 The passage reads: "one of the judges (this was Leon Monasteriotes) said that the soul of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer was aggrieved because the emperor had utterly cast aside his *Typikon* and all the writings he had lodged in the Monastery of Sosthenion, among which he had prophesied the revolution of the Vlachs." *O City of Byzantium*, 206. Actually, this may be read as an analogy—because of the similar situation for the emperor—and not a mistake, or in the sense that Bulgarians were present alongside the Vlachs as well.

between the Danube and Haemus, which became the territorial basis of the new kingdom, were not called Bulgaria in the eleventh and twelfth century, but Paristrion and later on most often (in an archaizing fashion) Moesia, but also Vlachia or Zagore (that is, across the mountain). Accordingly, in the sources the population is called Moesians, Vlachs and very rarely Bulgarians. Taken literally, this argument favors the extremist Romanian authors. Yet according to Primov, these names do not reflect the ethnic realities but actually confuse them, and the population was mostly Bulgarian. That is why, some twenty to twenty-five years after the revolt in the early thirteenth century, the new state and its people were referred to in the sources exclusively as Bulgaria and Bulgarians.

Third, the ancestry of the Assenids will never be known for certain on the basis of the available evidence (Choniates says only that they came from Moesia). According to Primov, they were probably of mixed Vlach-Bulgarian origin—from Bulgarian and Vlach ancestors on the slopes of Haemus. This is actually the only time that a Bulgarian author acknowledges a partly Vlach origin.¹⁴⁸

Fourth, the ancestry of the Assenids is of hardly any consequence for their activities and achievements. In the Middle Ages dynasties were often ethnically different from the majority of their subjects. The new state had an indisputably Bulgarian character. It was established on former Bulgarian territory and accepted as Bulgarian by contemporary Byzantine authors such as Choniates (in his reference to Basil II the Bulgar-slayer—an interesting twist of interpretation) and by Pope Innocent III in his correspondence with the third brother king Kaloyan (where the pope accepts his claims that his “ancestors” were kings from the First Bulgarian Kingdom). Finally, the political aspirations of the new state were like that of the previous one, as shown in Peter’s and Asen’s ambition “to unite the political power of Mysia and Bulgaria into one empire as of old.” Of the various interpretations of this phrase, Primov takes it to mean (like all Bulgarian authors do) the union of the Bulgarians from northern Bulgaria (Moesia or Mysia) with the Bulgarians from the southwestern lands (i.e., Macedonia, which during Byzantine rule was called “*thema* Bulgaria” and its population called Bulgarians). The phrase “as of old” is pivotal, as it refers to the first Bulgarian state, when Moesia, Thrace (south of the Haemus range) and Macedonia were united within its borders.

148 If we believe Robert L. Wolff, the Bulgarian medievalist Dimităr Angelov told him verbally that they were Vlachs but founded a state predominantly Bulgarian in traditions, population and language. Robert L. Wolff, “The Second Bulgarian,” 182.

Fifth, the state of the Assenids exerted considerable cultural and religious influence upon the Vlachs beyond the Danube, and this region was under the direct control of Kaloyan (whose title was “King of Bulgaria and Vlachia”) and Ivan (Ioan) Asen II (1218–1241), son of Asen I. This benefitted the Romanians because the Magyar expansion was resisted and temporarily halted. In choosing this interpretation of “Vlachia” in the title, Primov sides with Dimitrie Onciul and Ștefăn Ștefănescu and rejects the opinion of Bănescu and Giurescu that Vlachia in the title meant Bulgaria south of the Danube to the Haemus (based on the mid-thirteenth-century Franciscan traveler William of Rubruck). This interpretation (irrespective of its validity), while recognizing the role of the Vlachs, turns the dual title to the Bulgarians’ advantage. This was exploited by later nationalist authors, as will be seen.

Primov argued for recognition of the Vlachs’ role in medieval Bulgarian history (and the Bulgarians’ role in the history of the Romanians) on the grounds of scholarly objectivity and lack of bias, but also with an appeal to search the past for cases of co-operation and mutual assistance in fighting common threats and dangers, and not just cases of animosity. The struggle of the Bulgarians and Vlachs for freedom from Byzantine rule was exactly such a case of a common goal and a joint action:

The events around the creation of the Second Bulgarian State are an example of interaction and collaboration, of common struggle and a jointly won victory. What was achieved as a result of the blood that was shed side by side by sons of the Bulgarian and the Romanian peoples was of common interest and was to the benefit of both peoples. It is strange that these events, an example of united action, have caused many controversies between the historians that have studied them.¹⁴⁹

As can be seen, here too “ideology” guides the interpretation of the past, though it is “international collaboration” rather than nationalist animosity.

A Romanian example of a balanced and “conciliatory” treatment comes from Eugen Stănescu (1968). Stănescu’s rather elaborate (and quite conjectural) interpretation of the sources emphasizes the Vlacho-Bulgarian collaboration (or “symbiosis”) under Asen and Peter and attempts to show that this started already under Samuil (and that the killing of his brother Aaron by Vlachs is dubious). In this he distanced himself both from those who wanted

149 Borislav Primov, “Săzdavaneto na Vtorata,” 52–53, similarly on 9.

to see Samuil's kingdom as Vlach's creation and from those who wanted to see the Vlachs as "loyal subjects" or "allies" of the Byzantine Empire.¹⁵⁰

Here are more examples of moderation on the Romanian side in the Marxist language of the times. The idea that the towns on the lower Danube were autonomous from the end of the tenth century to the end of the twelfth century was re-asserted by Barbu Cîmpina, but in different terms and with a role reserved for the Bulgarians. It is argued by citing the "feudalization" of the Byzantine Empire, which allowed for the autonomy of the local feudal lords of Romanian, Slavo-Romanian or Bulgarian origins. The author specifically claims for the Romanian feudal lords the territories north of the Danube across Durostorum (Silistra) and the Banat. The towns of Paristrion (on the southern or right bank of the Danube) and (somewhat implicitly) Dobrudja were, in his view, inhabited by autochthonous Bulgarian and Romanian elements and some Greeks, plus the newly arrived barbarians.¹⁵¹

Another author—Barbu Campina—treats the appearance of the first and somewhat legendary Romanian and Slavo-Romanian "feudal states" of Menumorut, Glad, Gelou and Kean in the ninth century, on the eve of the Hungarian Conquest (mentioned by "Anonymus," a notary of King Béla III), as the result of a process of "feudalization" and autonomization from Bulgarian rule. This is interpreted in a presumably Marxist way as the local Romanian aristocracy's aspiration to control the feudal organization on its territory and appropriate the economic profits for itself instead of giving them to the central authorities of the Bulgarian empire. Yet the Romanian feudal lords were not themselves able to create a great state in the tenth century and had to search for a compromise solution for their class interests. They reconciled themselves to the strong states of the Bulgarians, Russians and Magyars expanding onto their territory, and they collaborated with them. According to Campina, the Romanian feudal states in fourteenth-century Wallachia and Moldova represented a continuity with this former political arrangement of boyars (feudal lords) and attest to the beneficial influence of Bulgarian, Russian and Hungarian feudalism.¹⁵²

150 Eugen Stănescu, "Byzantinovlachica. I: Les Vlaques à la fin du X^e siècle—début du XI^e et la restauration de la domination Byzantine dans la péninsule balkanique," *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 6, no. 3 (1968), 407–438.

151 Barbu Cîmpina, "L'influence byzantine sur le bas-Danube à la lumière des recherches récentes effectuées en Roumanie," *Revue roumaine d'histoire* 1, no. 1 (1962), 7–18, esp. 8, 10–11, 13.

152 Barbu Campina, "Le problème de l'apparition des états féodaux roumains," in *Nouvelles Études d'Histoire présentées au X^e congrès international des sciences historiques* (Rome, 1955; Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1955), 181–207, esp. 204, 206–207.

Ștefăn Ștefănescu treats Romanian-Bulgarian relations from the ninth to fourteenth centuries along similar lines. He endorses the view that both the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms strongly influenced the formation of Romanian feudal statehood. Yet he asserts that the Romanian feudal formations tended to pursue autonomization from Bulgarian (and Byzantine and Magyar) rule, which he explains as a general process of feudal fragmentation.¹⁵³ A shift can be detected in the Romanian authors' interest away from the Second (and the First) Bulgarian Kingdom to the actual Romanian territories, hence the question of Bulgarian domination of these territories.

Here we touch upon the older discussion of the expansion of the Bulgarian state north of the Danube. The concept was rejected outright by the older nationalist Romanian authors, but now a shift occurred. Al. Grecu (Petre P. Panaitescu) and Maria Comșa recognize a Bulgarian rule north of the Danube in the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁵⁴ This is also the opinion (as we saw) of B. Campina and Șt. Ștefănescu, based on the mention by Anonymus of Bulgarian (that is, Slavo)-Vlach or Vlach-Bulgarian political formations that were conquered by the Magyars at the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century. Yet the interpretation of Bulgarian domination is different with the Marxist Romanian authors. There is an emphasis on "feudal" fragmentation, the ineffectiveness of rule from afar and the gradual "autonomization" of the Romanian "feudal lords," rather than the full and direct domination presupposed by the older nationalist Bulgarian authors (or its flat rejection by Iorga and others).

Concerning the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, Eugen Stănescu and Ștefăn Ștefănescu credit Vlachs from north of the Danube with an active role in the liberation movement from Byzantium.¹⁵⁵ Ștefănescu in particular maintains that with the creation of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, the local political formations north of the Danube became dependent on the Assenids and

153 Ștefăn Ștefănescu, "Rumyno-bolgarskie svyazi v IX-XIV vv. i stanovlenie rumynskoi gosudarstvenosti," *Romanoslavica* 9 (1963), 531-542.

154 Petre P. Panaitescu, "'Perioada slavonă' la Români și ruperea de cultura Apusului," *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* 11, no. 1 (1944), 126-151, esp. 138; Al. Grecu [Petre P. Panaitescu], "Bulgaria în nordul Dunării în veacurile al IX-X lea," *Studii și cercetări de istorie medie* 1 (July-December 1950), 223-236. According to Panaitescu this rule meant a Slavic ruling class, control by the Bulgarian state and taxation, as well as religious influence, the liturgy in Slavonic and some Slavic population. It decreased in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the ruling class became Romanian. See also Maria Comșa, "Die bulgarische Herrschaft nördlich der Donau während des IX und X. Jh. im Lichte der archäologischen Forschungen," *Dacia* 4 (1960), 395-422.

155 *Istoria României*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Romîne, 1962), 12.

helped them in their political consolidation. They were in vassal relations to Kaloyan (reflected in his title “King of Bulgaria and Vlachia”) and Ivan Asen II, who countered the expansion of the Hungarian kingdom south of the Carpathians (in northwestern Wallachia) and its Catholic propaganda. A number of attempts at creating Romanian states at that time were directly influenced by Bulgarian statehood. During the struggles between Bulgarians and Magyars, the Romanian political formations gradually liberated themselves.¹⁵⁶ Here again, the Romanian authors’ description of Bulgarian political influence differs from that of the nationalist Bulgarian authors mentioned previously. Namely, it is not in terms of political domination but of common struggle against Byzantium, collaboration with local feudal rulers against the Magyars, and gradual autonomization.

For the Bulgarian authors as well, a kind of “normalization” occurred (or at least a change in strategy), in that the character of the Second Bulgarian State grew in importance, while the descent of the Assenids and the participation of the Vlachs was minimized and de-emphasized. As various authors have pointed out, the state’s Bulgarian character is easily proven by the continuity of territory, the continuity of name with the first Bulgarian state, the fact that Peter had himself crowned as king of the Bulgarians (and Vlachs) and that he first tried to capture the former capital Preslav, as well as by the loss of the ethnonym “Vlach” over time. Other proofs of the state’s Bulgarian character are the use of the Slavo-Bulgarian language and literature; the resumption of the imperial aspirations of the First Bulgarian Kingdom to equal, or replace, Byzantium; and the reference Kaloyan made in his correspondence with Pope Innocent III to the kings of the First Bulgarian Kingdom as his predecessors and even “ancestors” or “progenitors” (which demonstrates continuity irrespective of whether it is true), etc.¹⁵⁷ There is a similarity to Iorga’s argument

156 Ștefănescu, “Rumyno-bolgarskie svyazi,” 539; Ștefănescu, “Paisiy Hilendarskiy o rumyno-bolgarskih svyazah v XVIII veke. Kriticheskie zametki,” *Izvestiya na Instituta za istoriya pri BAN*, vols. 14–15 (Sbornik v chest na akademik Snegarov), 295–298, esp. 295.

157 For a very systematic exposition of the idea of continuity between the first and the second Bulgarian state, see Ivan Duychev, “Ideyata za priemstvenostta v srednovekovnata bălgarska dărzhava,” in Ivan Duychev, *Prouchvaniya vărhu srednovekovnata bălgarska istoriya i kultura* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1981), 68–81 (first published in *Izvestiya na Bălgarskoto istoricheskoto druzhestvo* 27 [1969], 5–19). Some of this was pointed out by the older Bulgarian authors in more nationalistic language: Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoriya na bălgarskata dărzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 3 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1972, first published in 1940), 99. According to Zlatarski, even though Asen and Peter were of Cuman origin, “since the very beginning they highlighted the Bulgarian character both of the uprising and of the newly established state and privileged the Bulgarian people, its language and culture”; this was so “because they clearly understood that the Tărnovo kingdom they created could emerge and consoli-

about the Bulgarianization of the kingdom, but unlike Iorga, the Bulgarian authors insisted that the state had a Bulgarian character since its inception.

...

Then in the 1970s and 1980s, the debate flared up again as the communist regimes took a decisive turn toward nationalism and yet another generation of scholars emerged with hardline views. Here are some examples.

Ivan Bozhilov on the Bulgarian side explains the presence of “Vlachs” in the Byzantine sources about the uprising as caused by the constant movement of the nomadic Vlachs within the Balkan Peninsula. This, he says, blurred the ethnic picture, so that the ethnonym was mechanically transferred to the local Bulgarian population. This explains why “Vlachs” do not exist in the earlier sources and disappear in the later ones. According to him, Nicetas Choniates in particular was very negligent in his use of ethnic names when he called the Bulgarians in the central and (north)eastern parts of the former Bulgarian kingdom “Moesians” or “Vlachs.” The other basic contemporary (somewhat later) source—Geoffroy Villehardouin (a historian of the Fourth Crusade in 1202–1204 and of the Latin Empire) also replaced the ethnonym “Bulgarians” with “Vlachs” when speaking of the Bulgarians from the central and eastern parts, that is, the region of the uprising. Thus the Byzantine and Western European sources created an incorrect ethnic picture, and “Vlachs” actually meant Bulgarians from the central and (north)eastern parts of the (former and now restored) Bulgarian state. According to Bozhilov, the name “Vlachia” referred to the Bulgarian lands as a whole (by Villehardouin and Robert de Clari or Robert de Cléry, chronicler of the Fourth Crusade), except when it was used together with the name “Bulgaria” (mostly in the title of King Kaloyan, and occasionally by Villehardouin), in which case it designated the former “trans-Danubian Bulgaria” (because Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia were already included in the Bulgarian kingdom). One can see here the interpretative *tour de force* to eliminate the Vlachs. Concerning the Assenids’ ethnic descent, Bozhilov has no doubt that they were Bulgarians, and not Vlachs, but also not of Cuman, Bulgarian-Cuman or Russian-Cuman origin. They descended from the Bulgarian aristocracy in Paristrion, “which expressed the Bulgarian people’s aspirations to overthrow Byzantine rule.”¹⁵⁸ Peter and Asen’s declaration (in

date itself only upon the historical rights of the Bulgarians to have a state of their own and upon the age-old traditions of Bulgarian culture.”

158 Ivan Bozhilov, *Familiyata Asenevtsi*, 11–19, citation on 19. Similar text appears in Ivan Bozhilov, “Bălgaria pri Asenevtsi,” 87–90. Here the key to the identification of Nicetas Choniates’s “Vlachs” as Bulgarians is found in his phrase “the barbarians who lived in

Choniates) that they would not be satisfied until they “unite the political power of Mysia and Bulgaria into one empire as of old”—that is, unite the northern Bulgarian lands and the southwestern Bulgarian lands (Macedonia)—is interpreted nationalistically by the author as “restoration of the onetime unity of the Bulgarian people in its age-old ethnic and political borders.”¹⁵⁹

Another Bulgarian hard-liner is Petăr Petrov, whose interpretations border on absurdity. He is the only historian of the socialist era to accept the (refuted) hypothesis of Peter and Asen’s descent from the old Bulgar rulers or aristocracy of the First Bulgarian kingdom. He argues for this hypothesis by citing Kaloyan’s reference in the correspondence with Pope Innocent III to his ancestors from the kings of the first Bulgarian state (which Petrov now takes at face value), and with the assertion to the same effect of the Bulgarian monk Paisiy of Hilendar Monastery (in his pre-scientific *Istoriya Slavyanobolgarskaya* of 1762) plus an interpretation of the Turkic name Asen (and his nickname Belgun) as possibly of a Bulgar variety. Petrov equates Moesians and Vlachs with Bulgarians, based on the quasi-mathematical logic that since Moesians = Vlachs (in Choniates’s words “the barbarians who lived in the vicinity of Mount Haimos, formerly called Mysians and now named Vlachs”), and Moesians = Bulgarians (during the first Bulgarian state centered in Moesia and in some passages of Choniates), then Vlachs = Bulgarians (as corroborated in Choniates’s conflation of the two in the reference to Basil II the Bulgar-slayer). He then compounds the absurdity by claiming that Vlachs and Bulgarians were actually the same (Bulgarian) people, that “Moesians and Vlachs” refer to the Bulgarians in Northern Bulgaria and “Bulgarians” refers to the Bulgarians south of Haemus. In other words, Vlachs were simply nonexistent.¹⁶⁰

If the sources have wrongly substituted Vlachs for Bulgarians, the Bulgarian scholars believe they must “restore” the real state of affairs by performing the opposite operation—replacing Vlachs with Bulgarians. This is done not in the translation of the sources themselves but in the footnotes. The footnotes for Vlachs state that this term should be understood to mean Bulgarians.¹⁶¹

The celebration of the 1300th anniversary of the founding of the Bulgarian state (1981) even prompted the Bulgarian Ministry of Education to try to reach

the vicinity of Mount Haimos, formerly called Mysians and now named Vlachs” (*O City of Byzantium*, 204) and somewhat paradoxically in the very absence of the name “Bulgarians” to designate the population of the eastern Bulgarian lands in his *History*.

159 Ivan Bozhilov, *Sedem etyuda po srednovekovna istoriya* (Sofia: Anubis, 1995), 163.

160 Petăr Petrov, *Văzstanoviyavane na bălgarskata dărzhava* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1985), esp. 67, 72–74, 94–98, 100.

161 *Grătski izvori za bălgarskata istoriya*, vol. 11 (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BAN, 1983), 28 (notes).

an agreement with the ministries of education of some “fraternal” socialist states about how the history textbooks of the respective states presented the mutual relations. In negotiations with Romania, the Bulgarian side requested the inclusion of the colonization of Wallachia and Moldavia by “Bulgarian Slavs” in the fifth to seventh centuries, as well as a mention that the territory between the Carpathians and the Danube and Transylvania were included in the First Bulgarian Kingdom. The Bulgarian officials also asked that Asen and Petăr not be described as Vlachs and that the Second Bulgarian Kingdom not be described as “Vlach-Bulgarian.” But predictably, all this led nowhere.¹⁶²

The Romanian hard line is represented by Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca (in a 1981 work). He reviews some Romanian authors (Bănescu, Onciul, Hasdeu, Xénopol, Iorga, Murnu, Brătianu and Panaitescu), with a special preference for Iorga, whose ideas he takes up, and he criticizes some Bulgarian authors before offering his own views. These simply rephrase the previous blunt tenets in quasi-Marxist terms. According to Tanașoca, the Vlachs had “autonomy” within the First Bulgarian Kingdom, and the Balkan Vlachs had a “regime of relative autonomy” under Byzantine rule. Asen and Peter, leaders of the revolt, were of Vlach origin, but in search of a larger “social base,” they associated with the Bulgarians and the Cumans of the Danubian plain. Their rebellion was motivated by aspirations of “regional autonomy” (a kind of “toparchy”) for Moesia, and they became chiefs of a “Balkan Vlachia” in the northeast of present-day Bulgaria (there were other Balkan Vlachs as well—those of the autonomous despots Hrysos, Strez, Bellota, etc. that emerged with the feudal fragmentation). The Bulgarians in particular supplied the state and ecclesiastical traditions associated with the First Bulgarian Kingdom. Initially the Assenids restricted themselves to the defense of their state north of the Haemus range—their own “Vlachia”—and did not want to get involved in Thrace. The idea of the Romanity of the Vlachs was central to their ideology and became a political idea and an instrument for national liberation. However, the third brother Kaloyan (Ioannitsa) and especially Ivan Asen II (1218–1241) embarked on imperial policies in the tradition of the First Bulgarian Kingdom with the objective of taking the place of Byzantium—these were actually Byzantine traditions in their Slavo-Bulgarian form. Ivan Asen II (son of Asen I) in particular became entirely detached from his Vlach milieu and renounced the idea of Romanity. He became attracted to the idea of restoring for himself

162 See the memoirs of the Bulgarian hard-liner Petăr Petrov, member of the Bulgarian delegation in the negotiations with the Romanian Ministry of Education (represented by Constantin Giurescu): Petăr Petrov, *Kogato edin zhivot ne stiga. Spomeni* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2012), 204–209.

the Orthodox Byzantine Empire from the hands of the Latins after the fall of Constantinople in 1204 (like King Simeon of the First Bulgarian Kingdom) while his empire became Slavicized. Still “Vlach autonomy” continued to exist *de facto*, even if it was not mentioned in Ivan Asen II’s title as “emperor of the Bulgarians and the Romaioi.” The Assenids did not expand their state north of the Danube (where other Vlachias existed), though they tried to extend their domination there and achieve an “imperial synthesis.” The Assenids’ rebellion and the restoration of the Bulgarian state is an expression of the political vitality of the Balkan Romanity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, followed by a decline and a rise of the Romanian principalities in the fourteenth century.¹⁶³

• • •

Dobrudja remained an especially contentious topic in Bulgarian-Romanian historiographical debates, even under the very different socialist realities and up to the present day. One would think that the return of Southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria by the Kraiova Treaty in 1940 with exchange of populations (recognized in the postwar order) would render the issue obsolete, but that was not the case. The issue was indeed “relegated to history,” but in the ironic sense that historians, rather than politicians, continued the feud, especially with the turn to national communism. It should be noted that the debates concentrate mostly on the era from the fall of the eastern part of the First Bulgarian Kingdom under Byzantine rule in 971 to the establishment of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom in 1185 and the times from the autonomization of the principality of Dobrotica (Dobrotic) from the Second Bulgarian Kingdom in 1371 to the conquest by the Ottomans (at the end of the 1300s). Thus the integration of the region in the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1186–1371) is mostly omitted.

Ivan Bozhilov debated Dobrudja’s ethnic composition during the eleventh and twelfth centuries with the Romanian scholars Petre Diaconu, Ion Barnea and Ștefan Ștefanescu and the archeologists of the “culture Dridu,” including Eugenia Zaharia and Ion Nestor.¹⁶⁴ The point for him was to claim

163 Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, “De la Vlachie des Assénides au second Empire Bulgare,” *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 19, no. 3 (1981), 581–594. His own views appear on 588–594.

164 Petre Diaconu, *Les Petchénègues au Bas-Danube* (Bucharest, 1970), 104. According to Diaconu, the local population in Dobrudja was identical to Attaliote’s “mixobarbarians,” that is, “un mélange valaco-bulgaro-petchénègue.” See also Ion Barnea and Ștefan Ștefanescu, *Din istoria Dobrogei*, vol. 3, *Bizantini, români și bulgari la Dunărea de jos* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1971); Ștefan Ștefanescu, “Les premières formations étatiques sur le territoire de la Roumanie,” *Dacoromania* 1 (1973), 104–113. Alongside

Dobrudja's (essentially and primarily) Bulgarian ethnic makeup in the face of the Romanian scholars' attempts to carve a place for the Vlachs—all this against the background of various barbarian invasions (Cumans, Pechenegs, Uz, etc.) and of the Byzantine domination and, later on, the semi-autonomy of Dobrudja (under Dobrotica). Thus Bozhilov's main objection to Diaconu's book on the Pechenegs is that he diminishes or neglects the primordial role of the Bulgarian ethnic element and, when speaking nebulously about "local chiefs" or the "autochthonous population," he actually means Romanians.¹⁶⁵

The archeological "Dridu culture" (named for the initial site of excavations near Bucharest), typified by its shiny black ceramics, became another point of contention both in terms of its ethnic identity—Romanian, Slav or Slavo-Romanian—and (on a related note) its era (eighth and ninth centuries or earlier or later) as well as its geographical space. According to Eugenia Zaharia, Ion Nestor and other Romanian archeologists, it unquestionably belonged to the Romanians in their formative period. Nestor in particular describes it as Romanian, identifies "proto-Romanians" as early as the sixth century and extends the area of the formation of the Romanian people to the entire present-day territory of the country.¹⁶⁶ In another version the Dridu culture emerged in the tenth century from the local Dacian-Roman culture with Byzantine influences and spread to the towns of the Lower Danube and northern Dobrudja. In Ivan Bozhilov's critique, Dridu is intentionally (and wrongly) dated after the fall of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, when in fact it belonged to that kingdom, and these towns were inhabited by Bulgarians.¹⁶⁷

Yet some Romanian authors such as Maria Comșa acknowledge that the First Bulgarian Kingdom and especially the Slavs thoroughly influenced the lands north of the Danube and speak of a shared Balkan-Danubian archeological culture. Furthermore, Constantin Daicoviciu, in his contribution to the 1969 *History of Romania*, considered the Dridu culture (identified in Muntenia and highly developed in Bulgaria) to be "Slav" or "Slavo-Bulgar" culture, thus dividing the

the beginnings of Romanian formations in Wallachia and Moldova in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Ștefanescu mentions Dobrotic's Dobrudja (112–113).

165 Ivan Bozhilov, "Les Petchénègues dans l'histoire des terres du Bas-Danube (Notes sur le livre de P. Diaconu, Les Petchénègues au Bas-Danube)," *Études balkaniques* 3 (1971), 170–175, esp. 174.

166 Eugenia Zaharia, *Săpăturile de la Dridu. Contribuție la archeologia și istoria perioadei de formă a poporului roman* (= Biblioteca de archeologie XII) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1967); *Istoria poporului roman*, ed. Andrei Oțetea (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1970), 108 (Ion Nestor's contribution). See Boia, *History and Myth*, 122–124.

167 Ivan Bozhilov, "Kulturata Dridu i pǎrvoto bălgarsko tsarstvo," *Istoricheski pregled* 26, no. 4 (1970), 115–124.

territory of Romania into Romanized Transylvania and, much later, Romanized Muntenia and Moldavia, stamped by a profound Slavic influence.¹⁶⁸

In reviewing the three-volume Romanian *History of Dobrudja* (the part by Ion Barnea in particular), Bozhilov, along with co-author Vasil Gyuzelev, objected to Barnea's treatment of the history of Dobrudja in 681–971 (that is, during the First Bulgarian Kingdom) as if no political and demographic changes had occurred. He also took issue with the role ascribed to the local Romanized population; the emphasis on local feudal lords (implicitly not Bulgarian) and even some political formations; and finally, the treatment of the material culture in Dobrudja in the twelfth century as provincial Byzantine culture (connected with the formation of the Romanian people).¹⁶⁹

In a recent Bulgarian *History of Dobrudja*, Ivan Bozhilov gives his own account of the period in question. He admits there was “a certain diminishing” of the Bulgarian population in Dobrudja as a result of the devastations caused by the Russians of Svyatoslav (968–971) and then by various barbarians during the Byzantine rule (and eventual migrations to the south or to the north) as well as the appearance of Turkic ethnic elements. Yet according to him, this did not alter “the Bulgarian character of Dobrudja” and did not lead to de-Bulgarianization. He then surveys the various ethnic groups that settled in Dobrudja—Romaioi, Pechenegs, Uz and Cumans—and finally comes to the “Vlach problem.” He argues that there were no Vlachs in the region because they are not mentioned in the sources. Still, he acknowledges three instances in which the sources do note Vlachs (also mentioned above): the Vlach Pudil, who came to the camp of Alexios I Komnenos near Anhialo in 1094; the episode with Andronikos I Komnenos, captured in 1165 in Galicia by Vlachs; and the Vlachs recruited by the Byzantine general Leon Vatatzes in the war with the

168 Maria Comșa, “Die bulgarische Herrschaft”; *Istoria României*, eds. Miron Constantinescu, Constantin Daicoviciu and Ștefan Pascu (Bucharest: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1969), 103–116. Quoted in Boia, *History and Myth*, 122. In Boia's opinion (124) it would be best to refrain from conclusions based on archeological remains about the language the people in question spoke or accept that the population was mixed.

169 Ivan Bozhilov and Vasil Gyuzelev, “I. Barnea, Șt. Ștefanescu, Din istoria Dobrogei.” In another work Barnea, after considering the very complex situation of the crossroads at the Lower Danube in the tenth through twelfth centuries on the basis of archeological and written evidence, concludes that the barbarians were crushed by Byzantium or had to accept its domination, while the “autochtones” (locals) could not play a political role at the time but successfully weathered all the ordeals they faced and survived in their place to the present day. See Ion Barnea, “Byzance, Kiev et l'Orient sur le Bas-Danube du x^e au xii^e siècle,” in *Nouvelles Études d'histoire présentées au x^e congrès des sciences historiques Rome 1955* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1955), 169–180, esp. 180.

Magyars in 1166.¹⁷⁰ The numerous interpretations these have engendered concerning the location of Vlachs are indicative of the largely conjectural nature of the arguments. Bozhilov states categorically that Vlachs were not present in Dobrudja in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (but should be sought in the places where the two *voivodships* were created later on). He adds a few pejorative remarks about the nomadic life of the Vlachs at that time.

The debate over Dobrudja's ethnic composition in the eleventh and twelfth centuries seems rather petty, especially given the profound ethnic changes in Dobrudja in the centuries thereafter, when there was a massive influx of new settlers, as traced by Gyuzelev in the same collective volume.¹⁷¹ The author starts with the opinion that in spite of the settlement of Pechenegs, Uz and Cumans during Byzantine rule, the main ethnic element was Bulgarian, and the nomads assimilated into it because of its more advanced culture. Then (based on other studies, mostly by Georgi Atanasov) he covers the subsequent changes. These include the settlement of Cumans *en masse* in the mid-twelfth century (especially in the Dobrudja steppes), of Tartars from the end of the thirteenth century to the fifteenth century, and of Vlachs and some Italian traders; the Turkic colonization (Osman Turks and possibly Seljuk Turks) in the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century, which caused a mass emigration of Bulgarians (and Vlachs) north of the Danube and fundamentally changed the ethnic composition of the region.

Interestingly, the aforementioned hard-line authors reacted negatively to the detailed regional studies of the Bulgarian scholar Georgi Atanasov, who presented (based mostly on archeological evidence) a picture of Dobrudja's very complex evolution. Here is a summary of it: depopulation as a result of the barbarian invasions, with some Romanized and Graecized population surviving in several towns at the end of the seventh century; a quite dense Bulgar population in the eighth and ninth centuries; rapid growth of the settlements and the population at the end of the ninth century and the first decades of the tenth century and the building of significant fortifications; massive devastations as a result of the Russian invasion and the Russian-Bulgarian-Byzantine war in 968–971; desertion of the fortresses in the interior of Dobrudja and the Deliorman (the region in northeastern Bulgaria adjacent to Dobrudja) during the Pecheneg invasions in 1034–1036, in which the old Bulgarian population was either exterminated or fled to safer places; nomadic Pechenegs, Cumans

170 *Istoriya na Dobrudzha*, vol. 2 (*Srednovekovie*), 163–174 (chapter by Ivan Bozhilov).

171 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 273–281 (in the chapter by Vasil Gyuzelev). It is quite ironic to read the statistics of the Bulgarians and Turks killed by the Vlach *voivod* Vlad II Tsepesh in his campaign in Dobrudja cited as evidence of the population's previous density.

and Tartars, but no fixed settlements in the interior of Dobrudja between the mid-eleventh century and the end of the fifteenth century (explained also by climatic changes—droughts); the great Tartar invasion of 1237–1242, followed by the gradual settling down of Cumans, Pechenegs, Uz, Alans and others and their integration into the surviving Bulgarian population on the Black Sea coast and around Provadia (this mixed population formed the basis of the Dobrudja despotate of Dobrotica around the mid-fourteenth century); the infiltration of the Turkic population beginning in the mid-fifteenth century, such as Tartars, Cumans, Yoruks and colonists from Asia Minor.¹⁷²

Opinions of Foreign Historians

Thus far I have presented the range of issues of contention between Bulgarian and Romanian historians by closely following the debates. I will now cite the opinion of some foreign scholars that bear on these issues and were used to support one's own position. Some of these authors expressed an opinion on the debate itself.

The Romanian side was backed by some non-Romanian authors, especially the Austrian historian Constantine R. von Höfler (as early as 1879) and the American scholar Robert L. Wolff (1949).¹⁷³ Höfler was especially insistent not only that the founders of the state were Vlachs and the state was Vlacho-Bulgarian (or Vlacho-Bulgarian-Cuman) but that “even if one piece of purely Slavic history is thus lost, the historical truth only wins.”¹⁷⁴

The mediating idea that the Bulgarians and the Vlachs formed a whole and acted together toward a common objective, but with the Romanians serving as the head and the Slavs the arm, was first formulated by R. Roesler (whose migration theory was otherwise vehemently rejected by many Romanian

172 Georgi Atanasov, “Nov pogled kăm demografskite i etnokulturnite promeni v Dobrudzha prez srednovekovieto,” *Izsledvaniya v chest na chlen-korespondent professor Strashimir Dimitrov*, vol. 1 (= *Studia balcanica* 23) (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo “Prof. Marin Drinov,” 2001), 185–214. This study summarizes a series of Atanasov’s articles in *Istoricheski pregled* (1991, 1992, 1996).

173 Robert Lee Wolff, “The Second Bulgarian Empire,” 180–193.

174 Constantin R. von Höfler, “Die Walachen as Begründer des Zweiten bulgarischen Reiches, der Asaniden, 1186–1257,” *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Bd. 95, Heft 1–4 (Vienna, 1880), 229–245, citation on 245.

scholars), to the annoyance of the Bulgarian scholars.¹⁷⁵ As we saw, Murnu put it to use in favor of Romania. While recognizing the “duality” of the ethnic elements, he emphasized the leading role of the Romanians.

Siding with the Bulgarians were some non-Bulgarian, mostly Slavic authors (which prompted Bănescu to react against the method of many “authors of the Slavic family”),¹⁷⁶ though these were not necessarily partisan and pro-Bulgarian. Especially great was the authority of Konstantin Jireček, the Czech author of one of the first histories of Bulgaria (1876). In that work he maintained that the name “Vlach” was mistakenly transferred to the Slavs from Moesia at the end of the twelfth century by Nicetas Choniates and that the brothers Asen and Peter descended from previous Bulgarian kings.¹⁷⁷

The Russian Byzantinist Fyodor Uspenskiy suggested (as early as 1879) that the Byzantine authors ascribed the uprising of 1185 to the Vlachs for political reasons and that it was in their interest not to mention the name “Bulgarian.”¹⁷⁸ The Czech author Joseph Ladislav Pič (1847–1911) agreed with Uspenskiy that the Byzantine authors replaced the Bulgarian name with the Vlach name out of political hatred and national disparagement. Pič also agreed with Uspenskiy that the Second Bulgarian Kingdom was Bulgarian from the very beginning.¹⁷⁹

Yet the idea that Choniates had deliberately avoided the name “Bulgarian” was rightly criticized by Vasilii Vasilevskiy in his review of Uspenskiy’s book. Regarding the ethnic character of the movement, he held that Nicetas Choniates expressed a perfect awareness of the “duality of the elements” that took part in

175 Robert Roesler, *Romänische Studien* (Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1871), 109–110. Roesler maintains that the Vlachs from Moesia carried out the uprising and that they were the founders of the new united state of Vlachs and Bulgarians. He also states that the courage and determination of the Vlachs made them leaders of the Slav population, which was already quite passive.

176 Bănescu, *Un problème d'histoire*, 38.

177 Konstantin Jireček, *Geschichte der Bulgaren* (Prague: Tempsky, 1876), 220 (in Bulgarian: Konstantin Ireček, *Istoriya na bălgarite*, ed. Vasil Zlatarski [Sofia: Strashimir Slavchev, 1929], 165, 172).

178 Fyodor Uspenskiy, *Obrazovanie Vtorago bolgarskago tsarstva* (Odessa: Tipografia G. Ul'rika) 1879), 57, 104. According to Uspenskiy, the Slav element had the main role in the struggle, but Cumans and Vlachs also took part (74–75, 102). He is inconsistent on the question of Asen and Peter’s ancestry. At one point he says they were Vlachs. Later, however, he calls them “pseudo-Vlachs” because they never showed special concern for their compatriots, and says they could hardly be of Vlach descent because they were not shepherds (74–75, 102, 105).

179 Joseph Ladislav Pič, *Über die Abstammung der Rumänen* (Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1880), 87–88.

the movement, and showed that the leaders of the uprising addressed the two nationalities. Regarding the origin of the Assenids, Vasilevskiy claimed that they were descendents of the old Bulgarian kings but were raised in a predominantly Vlach milieu and thus can be considered both Bulgarians and Vlachs and expressive of “precisely that fusion of the two nationalities, Bulgarian and Vlach, into one whole that can actually be observed in all narratives about the liberation struggle.”¹⁸⁰ Yet, reacting to Roesler, he maintained that “the ideal objective” of the revolt and its “spiritual means” in the struggle for independence were provided by the Slav element. The new state was Bulgarian in its traditions and content, and Kaloyan’s title was “tsar of Bulgarians and Vlachs”—primarily of Bulgarians and sometimes only Bulgarians, and never only Vlachs.¹⁸¹

According to the Russian-born Yugoslav Byzantinist Georg Ostrogorsky (1902–1976), Vlachs also lived in the Lower Danube region and, like the Cumans, had a “considerable” role in the uprising. However, Ostrogorsky states, the Bulgarians were sometimes called “Vlachs,” and the state was established as clearly Bulgarian.¹⁸²

Among the German scholars, Franz Dölger (who specialized in Byzantine studies together with Mutafchiev in Munich) took a position supportive of Ostrogorsky but evaded the issue of origins. According to Dölger the state was created in accordance with the Bulgarian imperial tradition (of Simeon) of rivaling Byzantium and striving for the title of emperor or *basileus* (tsar). The Assenids’ state was a “national tsardom,” but one with aspirations for gaining the “world throne” of Constantinople (especially Ivan Asen II).¹⁸³

Gennady G. Litavrin, a leading Russian Byzantinist of the post-World War II period, underlines the dual motives (“liberation” plus “anti-feudal”) and dual Vlacho-Bulgarian character of Asen and Peter’s uprising and the futility of asking which ethnic element in it was the most numerous. As for the ancestry of the leaders, again, he says it is impossible to answer with certitude but that the

180 Vasilii G. Vasilevskiy, “Kriticheskie i bibliograficheskie,” 174–175, citations on 176, 178, 179, 181. Choniates does not say it clearly, but he most likely considers them Vlachs (178).

181 Ibid., 181.

182 Georg Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* (Munich: C.H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1940), 287.

183 Franz Dölger, “Bulgarisches Cartum und byzantinisches Keisertum,” in *Actes du IV^e congrès international des études byzantines. Sofia, 1934*, vol. 1 (Sofia, 1935), 57–68, esp. 66.

issue does not deserve much attention and that in any case, they were connected with the local population.¹⁸⁴

A balanced view appears in a 1980 work by the Greek historian Phaedon Malingoudis. He believes that Peter and Asen are descended from the Cumans; that Vlachs participated in the uprising but that the state was Bulgarian in political character and ethnic composition; and that by “Vlachs” Nicetas Choniates meant an ethnonym and not “shepherds.” According to him, for the authors of the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, “Moesi” usually meant Bulgarians in an archaizing fashion. However, Choniates uses it for Vlachs (in his statement about “the barbarians who lived in the vicinity of Mount Haimos, formerly called Mysians and now named Vlachs”), whereas Malingoudis accepts Zlatarski’s solution that this meant both Vlachs and Bulgarians or other ethnic elements between the Danube and Haemus (Haimos). In his opinion both Vlachs and Bulgarians took part in the uprising, but he considers fruitless the question of which element predominated (and emphasizes the important and perhaps decisive role of the Cumans).¹⁸⁵

One should also mention the opinion of Florin Curta, a Romanian-American who is a leading medievalist on Southeastern Europe. His treatment hews strictly to the only two contemporary sources (Choniates and the chronicler of the Third Crusade, Ansbert), according to which the brothers (and also the warlords Dobromir Chrysos and Alexios Slav, a nephew of Peter and Asen) were Vlachs and the uprising was a joint (Vlach and Bulgarian) effort. However, he does not use the Vlach contribution in an ideological way and simply says that when Ioannitsa entered negotiations with Pope Innocent III in the hope of obtaining an imperial title, “The Vlach revolt had turned into the Second Bulgarian Empire.”¹⁸⁶

184 Gennady G. Litavrin, *Bolgariya i Vizantiya v XI–XII vv.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1960), esp. 431–437.

185 Phaedon Malingoudis, “Die Nachrichten des Niketas Choniates über the Entstehung des Zweiten Bulgarischen Staates,” *Byzantina* 10 (Thessaloniki, 1980), 53–148, esp. 83–100. Interestingly, the author points out the Cumans’ decisive role in the uprising but says they were a “war instrument” under the leadership of the uprising without their own goals of setting up a Cuman state. Not coincidentally, this work received a positive review from Vassil Gjuzelev, “Neue Untersuchung über den Aufstand des Aseniden,” *Paleobulgarica* 3, no. 4 (1979), 76–80.

186 Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500–1250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 357–365, citation on 365. Curta interprets the correspondence between Ioannitsa and Pope Innocent III thus: if the pope wanted to flatter Ioannitsa by pointing out his Vlach origins—that he had come from the “nobility of the City of

All writings by foreigners on the subject of the controversy were scrutinized and reviewed positively or negatively, depending on whether they corroborated one's stance or contradicted it. Referring to foreign authorities, especially those sympathizing with one's own cause, was a strategy in the Bulgarian-Romanian historiography war. It gave the assertions an air of scientificity and neutrality. Conversely, "inimical" opinions of foreign scholars were criticized as biased and unscholarly. Romanian authors whose positions were close to the Bulgarian ones enjoyed special favor with Bulgarian authors (including Ioan Bogdan from the older authors and Ștefan Ștefanescu from the younger ones) and vice versa (though more rarely). It is also worth noting that in order to propagate their views internationally, Romanian scholars in particular published widely in French (the language of diplomacy in the interwar era), which led Mutařchiev as well to have his book translated into French. In general the Bulgarian authors were more likely to publish in German or Russian journals due to the German-influenced education of the older generation and, later, the dominating Soviet influence.

Some Considerations and Conclusions

At this point we should probe deeper into the debates. To return to the questions posed in the introduction: what fueled them, and what were the stakes? What were the underlying assumptions? What functions and needs did they fulfill?

The whole historical controversy was clearly driven by the political conflict over Dobrudja, initially because of the way borders were drawn at the Congress of Berlin (1878)—in which Northern Dobrudja was given to Romania, leaving Bulgaria dissatisfied—but especially after Romania's annexation of Southern Dobrudja during the Second (Inter-Allied) Balkan War in 1913 (to be regained by Bulgaria in 1940). Bulgarian historians (as well as philologists, geographers and others) were particularly incensed by the rise of Romanian nationalism since the establishment of Greater Romania as a result of World War I, which Bulgaria lost, and by the efforts of Romanian historians to justify their country's claims of "historical rights" over the newly acquired territories. Bulgarian philologist Stoyan Romanski (in a critical review of a work of the philologist Constantin C. Diclescu) clearly expresses the resentment:

Rome"—his strategy worked. Ioannitsa acknowledged the Roman ancestry attributed to him by the pope but also claimed descent from the Bulgarian kings in order to demand a crown and an imperial title (379–383).

The unexpected enlargement of Romania after the last war was reflected especially strongly in the development of the historical sciences [...] Historians and philologists in Romania joined hands in justifying the historical and cultural rights of the Romanians not only upon the lands they gained as a result of the two wars, but also upon those to which they wanted to extend the borders of their state, owing to their burgeoning imperialist aspirations.¹⁸⁷

The past thus served as a playground for contemporary claims and conflicts against a historical backdrop in which the sources served mainly as arguments to support one's own cause. The historians conducted themselves like politicians. Iorga in particular was an exemplary figure of a historian-politician prominent in political and public life as well. Mutařchiev assumed a similar public role defending Bulgarian historical rights (also vis-à-vis Serb nationalist aspirations), though not a directly political role.

All participants in the debate shared—or at least paid lip service to—the positivist standards and ideals of history as “science,” such as lack of bias, “objectivity,” quest for the truth and scrupulousness. Hence there were mutual accusations of lack of objectivity, incorrect treatment of the sources, errors, purely imaginary constructions (without any confirmation in the sources) and falsification. Yet while each side accused the other of trespassing upon and compromising the same scholarly ideals, each side demonstrated tentativeness, erudition and “text-critique” of the sources (where Mutařchiev excelled) notwithstanding. History was put directly at the service of a political cause—defending the “historical rights” of one's nation. The contradiction with the positivist scholarly standards was not noticed (or not reflected upon), and in any case the political objectives came first (Iorga, for his part, explicitly acknowledged this), but were always couched as countering the opponent and proving him “wrong” (in the name of “historical truth”). Here are some of the ways in which the spirit of *parti-pris* was reflected in the scholarship.

The mutual animosity extended to the depiction of the medieval Vlachs and Bulgarians. For instance, Iorga spoke with disdain of the Bulgar hordes and claimed the Romanized Dacians had a more advanced civilization and culture. Zlatarski and Mutařchiev spoke with disdain of the Vlachs as “nomadic” shepherds wandering from place to place, subjects of various rulers without state traditions of their own. Similarly, the Romanian scholars readily cited

187 Stoyan Romanski, “Const. C. Diclescu, Elemente vechi grecești din limba română. Dacoromania. Buletinul ‘Muzeului limbei rumâne,’ An. IV, Cluj, 1927, 394–516,” *Makedonski pregled* 3, no. 3 (1927), 130–137, cit. 131–132.

Theophylact of Ohrid on the Bulgarians' negative characteristics, while the Bulgarian authors cited Kekaumenos on the Vlachs' negative characteristics.

National bias guided the selection of the sources, the weight accorded to them (the Bulgarian attempts to downplay Choniates and question his authority) and the interpretation of a particular piece of evidence (contained in some statement). A typical strategy in the controversy was that a given statement would be read literally if it was in accordance with one's position, but subjected to "critical scrutiny" (and excessive criticism) to deduce a different meaning if it was at odds with one's position. This is clearly seen in the treatment of the name "Vlach" from the sources. Whereas the Romanian scholars took it literally, the Bulgarian scholars made every possible effort to show that it actually referred to Bulgarians (or at least included Bulgarians). As we have seen, the fact that Choniates used the Vlach ethnonym incorrectly on one occasion was often taken as an indication that he was mistaken in all cases.

One can find entirely speculative hypotheses, such as Zlatarski's speculations about the kinship of Peter and Asen with a certain Boril, favorite of the Byzantine emperor, or Mutafchiev's attempt to validate his hypotheses of the Russian-Cuman descent of the brothers. Or when George Murnu interpreted Peter and Asen's intention (according to Choniates) of joining Moesians and Bulgarians under one rule "as of old" to mean the joining of Vlachs and Bulgarians as in putative previous attempts to overthrow the Byzantine rule.¹⁸⁸ To this one can add the use (by alleged "positivists") of constructions such as "it could hardly have been otherwise . . .," "one can affirm with great probability that . . .," "it might have been so . . ." and the like.

More typical are cases of "stretching" or over-interpretation of the sources to fit one's own ideas or purposes. The most elaborate example of this sort is the interpretation of the title of Kaloyan (Ioannitsa)—"Tsar of Bulgarians and Vlachs" (and "of Bulgaria and Vlachia")—and the contradictory phrases about his ancestry in the correspondence between him and Pope Innocent III.¹⁸⁹ As is known, Kaloyan conducted a complex diplomatic game with the pope, hoping to obtain from him the title of emperor (and for his archbishop the title of patriarch) in exchange for accepting union with Catholicism. He succeeded in obtaining the title of "king" (*rex*) but pretended that he was accorded the title of emperor (and titled himself so). He was addressed by the pope as ruler of the Bulgarians and Wallachians (Vlachs), and his ancestors were supposedly noble Romans: "we heard that your ancestors came from the nobility of the City of

188 George Murnu, "Les roumains da la Bulgarie," 8–9. This was noted by Borislav Primov, "Săzdaneto na Vtorata," 33–34.

189 "Correspondence between Pope Innocent III," 217–233.

Rome.”¹⁹⁰ Kaloyan accepted this, yet he also claimed some Bulgarian kings from the first Bulgarian state as his “predecessors”. Then the pope accepted this and went further in calling them his “ancestors” (*progenitors*), which was accepted by Kaloyan. There is a scholarly consensus that Kaloyan was not a descendent of the kings from the First Bulgarian Kingdom, but the question is: why did he claim such origins (and why did the pope endorse this)? The more general question is: why two different origins—an obvious impossibility—and how should this (and the dual title) be interpreted?

Zlatarski’s rather confused interpretation of Kaloyan’s dual title is in keeping with his theory that Bulgarians from Northern Bulgaria (Moesia) were called Vlachs at the time of the revolt of Kaloyan’s brothers Asen and Peter two decades earlier. According to him, in the geographical terminology of those times, “imperator Bulgarorum et Blacorum” meant that he was king of the Bulgarians from the western and southwestern lands (Macedonia) that he reunited to the Bulgarians in Northern Bulgaria, which was then still called Vlachia (because there were also Vlachs and others there). Upon learning that he was “king of the Vlachs,” the pope used this title in order to convince Kaloyan to join the Roman Catholic Church by ascribing him Roman ancestry (because he knew that the Vlachs descended from Romans). Kaloyan in turn accepted this in the hope of proving his descent from the Bulgarian kings of the First Bulgarian Kingdom (!), based upon the territory of his contemporary Vlachia (that is, Northern Bulgaria) and thus to claim a royal/imperial title and an independent church. At first he called the former Bulgarian kings his predecessors (*praedecessores*) but later used the stronger term “ancestors” (*progenitores*). That Kaloyan was actually Bulgarian (even if not a descendent of Bulgarian kings) is proved also by the fact that he wrote his letters in Bulgarian and they were later translated into Greek and from Greek into Latin. In his later letters he sometimes dropped “Vlachs” from his title and used only “King of the Bulgarians.” The dual title had become an anachronism when he united all Bulgarian lands and there was no longer any need to differentiate between Bulgarians from Northern and Southwestern Bulgaria (however, it remained as an anachronism in the pope’s chancellery, and the error was transmitted from there to the Crusaders of the Fourth Crusade).¹⁹¹

The interpretation favored by most Bulgarian authors (echoing Uspenskiy and Pič) is simpler and more consistent (though not necessarily more true). They say the correspondence was a pure game of diplomacy and involved duplicity on Kaloyan’s part: he tried to “pass” as a descendent of the Roman

190 Ibid., 219.

191 Zlatarski, “Potekloto na Petăr i Asen,” 348–351.

Empire in order to obtain the crown (but he was not of Roman descent, meaning not a Vlach). There is the additional nuance that the pope was the first to ascribe to him Roman descent in his effort to win the Bulgarians for a union with the Holy See. Bulgarian scholars interpret this as flattery by the pope, accepted by Kaloyan even though he knew it was not true. Thus the “legend” of Kaloyan’s Roman descent emerged.¹⁹² In a further interpretative twist, “Roman” (in the sense of “from Rome”) is equated with “Vlach” (because the Vlachs claimed descent from the Romanized population), so the rejection of (the obviously untrue) “Roman” or “from Rome” entails the rejection of “Vlach”—and thus proves the Bulgarian thesis.¹⁹³

For the Romanian scholars “Roman descent” means Romanian descent as confirmed by the title “King of the Bulgarians and Vlachs.”¹⁹⁴ In Iorga’s interpretation Kaloyan was certainly a Vlach like his brothers, and thus of “Roman descent.” But Iorga gives an additional explanation for the play between “Vlach” (“Wallachian”) and “Roman.” Thus although the pope invoked the Vlachs’ Roman origin (in saying Kaloyan was of Roman descent), he preferred the “national” appellation of “Vlach” in addressing him with the title “King of the Bulgarians and Vlachs.” The reason was that he could not go against the imperial Roman doctrine that there was only one universal “Roman” empire (at this time also another Germanic “Roman” empire) and thus hurt the Latin emperor in Constantinople (plus the Hungarian king, who also had imperial ambitions). As for the pope attributing to Kaloyan royal ancestry from the First Bulgarian Kingdom (in fact, claimed by Kaloyan and recognized by the pope), it was without any factual basis and just to make him divulge the bitter pill (that he could not be crowned as emperor but as king), but also for reasons

192 Along those lines, see Ivan Duychev, “Prepiskata na papa,” 80, 84. In Duychev’s view the pope’s assertion that Kaloyan was of Roman descent (first expressed as “from the nobility of the City of Rome” and then in other variations) should in no way be taken as an indication of Vlach’s descent but as a “legend like those that were widely spread in Byzantium.” The pope was the first to use it (hence the opinion of some that he invented it), and it was well received by Kaloyan. Yet Duychev does not say that Kaloyan accepted it to support his claim for a crown from the pope but rather that he relied on the pope’s acceptance of his claim of descent from previous Bulgarian kings.

193 *Istoriya na Bălgariya*, vol. 3 (Sofia: BAN, 1982), 135 (chapter by Borislav Primov).

194 Bănescu cites with disapproval Uspenskiy and Joseph Ladislav Píř, who did not see in the correspondence between Kaloyan and the pope anything but hypocrisy and flattery and a diplomatic game. He also objects to Duychev’s interpretation. See Bănescu, *Un problème d’histoire*, 26, 34, 77–78.

of legitimacy (because he could not be consecrated as a descendent of Vlach shepherds, who had not yet created a state).¹⁹⁵

Thus Romanian and Bulgarian scholars alike saw the pope and Kaloyan as playing a diplomatic game. However, the scholars interpret the reference to Kaloyan's two origins in this game in diametrically opposed ways. For the Bulgarian authors he was, if not Bulgarian, in any case not Vlach, but wanted to pass as Vlach/Roman in order to receive the imperial crown. For the Romanian authors he was Vlach but (in Iorga's view) wanted to pass as Bulgarian, again for reasons of legitimacy (as heir of former kings). In a supreme irony from a nationalistic point of view, for the Bulgarian authors he legitimized himself as Vlach/Roman (which he was not), while for Iorga he legitimized himself as Bulgarian (which he was not). That is, he pretended to be precisely what was undervalued by the respective nationalist historians.

At a deeper level, the debates were fueled by the need for a (glorious) past in the construction of one's national identity. This need was particularly strong with the Romanians, whose location (if not origins) until the tenth century are disputed to this day and whose first state formations appeared quite late, in the first half of the thirteenth century, and acquired a more definite shape on the eve of the Ottoman invasion. Moreover, their continuous presence in present-day Wallachia and Moldavia—that is, in their present state—has also been disputed. As G.I. Bratianu bitterly put it, the Romanian people “does not have a history, does not have an origin and a fatherland.”¹⁹⁶ Mutařchiev rubbed salt into the wound by denying the Romanians a medieval history of their own and accusing Iorga of inventing it at the expense of the neighbors, particularly the Bulgarians. To quote Mutařchiev, Iorga “assigns to the history of his people events, facts and everything that comes in handy from the past of the other Balkan peoples” (and the Bulgarians as neighbors suffer most).¹⁹⁷

In the same place Mutařchiev accuses Iorga and the Romanian nationalist historians in general of a newfound interest in the Balkans as a Romanian motherland (contrary to the older Carpathian theory) after the incorporation of Transylvania into Greater Romania.

195 Most thoroughly in Iorga, *Formes byzantines*, 147–150. See also Iorga, “Notes d'un historien,” 87; Iorga, *Geschichte des Rumänischen*, 124–125. Kaloyan is presented here as a non-noble king of herdsmen or shepherds (*Hirtenimperator*).

196 Bratianu, *Une énigme et un miracle*, 34.

197 Mutařchiev, “N. Iorga, *Formes byzantines*,” citation on 142; Petăr Mutařchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 238. Similarly Miletich, “Bălgari i romăni,” 73. To quote Miletich, the Romanians forgot their “modest historical past and the age-old political and cultural preponderance of the Bulgarian people, to whom they owe their old culture in particular.”

Thus the debate touches upon sensitive issues such as the construction of national identity through the past, and the past as a source of national pride. The national(ist) assumption—and ideal—is that the nation has existed forever (or as long as possible), preferably on a delimited and stable territory—thus, with continuity both in time and space. A state of one's own is the best credential, and the Bulgarians were more fortunate in this respect than the Romanians (yet less fortunate than the Greeks). That is why even a shared past and “entangled” histories—as the case of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom appears to be—had to be divided into neatly delineated national histories with their own spaces. Every nation should ideally have exclusive property on some sector of the past secured by its historians (to repeat Höfler's words, if the Second Bulgarian Kingdom was created by Vlachs, “one piece of purely Slavic history is thus lost”). This explains the clash over the appropriation of this particular creation of the past, in which the Bulgarians had the advantage of name and continuity in territory with a previous state, and the Romanian scholars (even Iorga) ultimately had to give up their claims. Yet the challenge proved serious, and even if it could largely be concealed from the lay public, it could not be ignored by the professional historians.

The challenge went beyond the scandal with the Vlach dynasty (and Vlach participation in the uprising and the state) to question the very meaning of “Bulgarian.” Certainly, it designated a state and church tradition, a language and script (Slavic), and literature. But at bottom was the issue of ethnicity (“nationality”). Behind the name, what was the ethnic composition of the state? Was it a “national” state, in Iorga's misleading nationalist terminology? It is here that Iorga struck a heavy blow. He denied the (homogenous) ethnic character of the Bulgarian state while claiming the (mono)ethnic character of the Romanian people and of its putative “organizations” or “crystallizations.” To begin with, he challenged the Bulgarian character of even the first Bulgarian state, created by the Bulgars by subjugating the Slavs and later mixing with them. In his view it was not a national state even if it eventually came to ethnic homogenization (the Bulgars lost their “national character” and became Slavicized), because it expanded and imitated the Byzantine Empire in its drive to become “an empire,” if not “the empire,” by replacing Byzantium. According to Iorga the Bulgarian state of the Assenids was even less of a “national” one because of the participation of the Vlachs (and other peoples) and only eventually became Bulgarianized with the change of dynasty (but then again, some rulers were not of Bulgarian descent).

Probably in a search of a counter-argument, Mutafchiev reached the point when he started questioning the meaning of “Vlach.” Thus in one place, concerning the name “Vlach” in the sources about the uprising and the foundation

of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, Mutafchiev asked “whether this name has an ethnic content and means inhabitants of Romanian nationality (*narodnost*) or is used to designate relations of a very different nature.”¹⁹⁸ He even planned to examine this in detail (as Ivan Duychev states)¹⁹⁹ but never did. This is hardly by chance—he could not have settled the issue from nationalist assumptions and on the basis of the sources alone. On the other hand, he never questioned the meaning of “Bulgarian” and (along with Zlatarski) assumed the amalgamation of Bulgars and Slavs and the finality of the “ethnogenesis” from very early on. He excluded (or ignored) other ethnic elements in the state—such as the autochthonous population, Romaioi, and later Vlachs, Cumans, Pechenegs and Uz—or claimed they became “Bulgarianized.” Thus when reacting to Iorga’s claim that the name “Bulgarian” (under Byzantine rule) was merely political, he claimed that it expressed a “nationality” and went into the Bulgarian ethnogenesis and its extension to Slav-populated Macedonia under the Bulgarian name (inherited from the “Turanian” Bulgars) on the basis of a common (Slav) language and a Bulgarian national and state consciousness.²⁰⁰ In his steps followed Ivan Duychev in tracing the formation of the “Bulgarian nation” (he also used the word “nationality”) in the early Middle Ages, as well as Dimităr Angelov.²⁰¹

Ethnicity (or “nationality”) became all-important in the Bulgarian-Romanian debate, which at a deeper level centered on questions such as who lived on a certain territory, the ethnic composition of states, the ethnic descent of dynasties, and Bulgarian/Romanian ethnic interactions. However, ethnicity is certainly a modern nationalist concern. The question is: what significance did ethnicity have in the Middle Ages, and was it politically important?

198 Mutafchiev, “Proizhodăt na Asenovtsi,” 151–152.

199 Ivan Duychev, “Profesor Petăr Mutafchiev,” xix. According to Duychev, Mutafchiev intended to study the use of ethnic names in the sources, such as Vlachs, Bulgarians and Moesi, but did not do it.

200 Mutafchiev, *Bălgari i rumăni*, 170–179, 198. Mutafchiev also asserted that the Cuman dynasties of Teters and Shishmans were Slavicized.

201 Ivan Dujčev, “La formation de l’état bulgare et de la nation bulgare,” in *L’Europe aux IX^e–XI^e siècles. Aux Origines des Etats nationaux* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1968), 215–224. Also Vasil Zlatarski, “Obrazuvane na bălgarskata narodnost,” in Vasil Zlatarski, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1972), 313–358 (first published in *Bălgarska istoricheska biblioteka*, vol. 1 [1928], 74–112). See also the medievalist Dimităr Angelov, *Obrazuvane na bălgarskata narodnost* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1971). According to Angelov (and the accepted view) the Bulgarian ethnicity (*narodnost*) was consolidated with the introduction of Christianity (865) and of the Slavic script and education, that is, toward the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth.

It should be noted that Mutafchiev had a theoretically elaborated view on nations and nation-building as a modern phenomenon (dating back to the French Revolution), even if he thought that the beginnings of the “nationalities” (or *narodnost*) lay in the Middle Ages and that they were the product of a long evolution. According to him, the “nationalities” of the Middle Ages appeared to be “amorphous bodies” with “external” unity (based on language and a common name, usually the name of the dominant ethnic group). He rightly thought that during the Middle Ages (and into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), a sense of “national” belonging did not define the individual. Furthermore, he believed, states and societies were not guided by the principle of “preservation of the nationality,” as this came after the French Revolution. The nationalities thus provided the “material” for the nations, yet without the necessary homogenization (in his words, the “leveling out” of differences, “assimilation”) and awareness of being a community that defines a full-fledged modern nation.²⁰² Yet in his debate with Iorga, Mutafchiev was driven to a nationalist recasting of the medieval past far beyond what he was ready to concede in his theoretical reflections. Iorga also showed sensitivity to the nature and principles of the medieval states and societies (especially when he accused the Bulgarian historians of modernizing the past). But he was ready to apply them only to the medieval Bulgarians, not to the Romanians.

The distinction is often made (in this debate as well) between ethnonyms as designations of ethnic groups; politonyms as designations of political units and their inhabitants, regardless of ethnic origin; socionyms as designations of groups based on profession, way of life, social status, and so on; and geographical designations (often derived from previous politonyms or ethnonyms). To say that a certain word is used in the sources as a politonym (or a geographical designation derived from it) implies that it disregards the actual ethnic composition—an insult to a nationalist and a bone of unending contention, because in most cases the meaning can only be surmised and can always be challenged. As we saw, Iorga proposed treating the name “Bulgarian,” as applied

202 In posthumously published lectures: Petăr Mutafchiev, *Leksii po istoriya na kulturata* (Sofia: Anubis, 1995), 180–203. This sounds much like the insistence upon medieval roots of contemporary nations in Anthony Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000), 62–77; Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 170–198; Anthony Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Anthony D. Smith, “National Identities: Modern and Medieval?” in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, eds. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson and Alan V. Murray (Leeds: University of Leeds, Leeds Studies in English, 1995), 21–46.

to Samuil's kingdom and the kingdom of the Assenids, as a purely political designation. Mutafchiev fundamentally disagreed, suggesting instead that the name "Vlach" referred to a transhumant way of life and the occupation of sheep-breeding (in today's term, as a socionym). He did not deny the (initially) ethnic meaning but contended that by the time of the uprising, its meaning had been extended to encompass all those of whatever ethnicity (including Bulgarians) whose main livelihood was sheep-breeding.²⁰³ The question is: was that true of the Vlachs at the time? Here are some opinions on the Vlachs in the sources and on ethnicity in the Middle Ages in general.

As the prominent Hungarian scholar Matthias Gyóni rightly pointed out, the names of the medieval peoples in the sources do not mean they were ethnically pure, homogeneous, without admixtures and with a "national character." Almost every medieval people was, at its origins, a conglomerate of different ethnies. The name "Vlach," as used by the Greek authors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, meant an ethnic group. More precisely, it was transformed into a separate "people" when its ethnic substratum, which spoke a neo-Latin language, acquired a strong Slavic admixture and also mixed with Turkic peoples (including Bulgars, Pechenegs, Cumans and Turks-Vardariotes). The neighboring peoples attributed a certain importance to the Vlach ethnic homogeneity and to the Vlach language, thus perpetuating the Vlach name. It was only much later, during the modern era, that the name "Vlach" changed its meaning, from the name of a people to a way of life and the name of an occupation.²⁰⁴

The Russian scholar Gennady Litavrin also notes the complex contents of the ethnonyms in the medieval sources, including the Byzantine, and that most often they point not only to the ethnic specificity of a certain people (such as linguistic or anthropological traits) but also to its prevailing occupation, inhabited territory (habitat), political organization, religious affiliation, and so on. Litavrin holds that the ethnonym "Vlach" had a stronger ethnic aspect than "Romaioi" or "Bulgarians" because it did not carry the notion of a definite and delimited territory and of a state formation, the name of whose prevailing population could be transferred to other ethnic groups within its boundaries. The name "Vlach" in the Byzantine sources points mainly to economic activities (herding sheep), way of life (transhumance) and close-knit ties, and not to anthropological differences from the surrounding peoples. Even so, Litavrin believes (as does Gyóni) that the Vlachs were a definite ethnic group until the

203 Mutafchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya*, 37.

204 Matthias Gyóni, "Le nom Vlachoi dans l'Alexiade d'Anne Comnène," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 44 (1951), 241–252, esp. 246–247.

end of the thirteenth century. The fact that the ethnic name became “blurred” in the fourteenth century and was transferred to other animal-breeders independent of ethnicity does not mean that they stopped being a separate ethnic category.²⁰⁵ In other words, it was precisely the previous statehood that made the name “Bulgarian” more of a “politonym,” that is, referring to the population of a certain state or of its territory after its demise irrespective of ethnicity. In this sense Iorga was vaguely right.

When reviewing some newer literature on ethnicity, one can make several points. To begin with, traditionally (before World War II) and going back to ancient times, ethnicity was conceived as an “objective” category of classification of the cultural variety of human populations, in terms of language, outlook, customs, beliefs, way of life, of warfare, and so on. Together with that, ethnicity was thought of as somehow biologically based (on common descent and kinship) and was essentialized as something stable and unchangeable. After the excesses of nationalism and fascism, with their concern for “pure” ethnies and under the impact of ethnography and sociology, ethnicity came to be regarded as a “subjective” and dynamic category centered on the maintenance of boundaries (by selecting and emphasizing differential—diacritical—markers) between groups with changing members and cultural content. Ethnic groups are not biological communities, not necessarily territorial and do not have a fixed “land of origin.”²⁰⁶

Ethnicity certainly played a role in defining and grouping people in the Middle Ages (and in ancient times). According to the *Traditionskern* (kernel of tradition) ethnogenesis theory, it played a role in building the early medieval barbarian political organizations by rallying culturally heterogeneous groups around a “tradition” (myths of ancestry, of an original motherland and migrations, etc.) of an elite group of royal or noble clans. In this case, of course, ethnicity under a particular ethnonym is an “engineered” process of group formation with a fictitious common descent; the tradition itself is “invented.”²⁰⁷

205 Gennady G. Litavrin, “Vlahi vizantiyskikh istochnikov X–XIII vv.,” in *Yugo-vostochnaya Evropa v srednie veka* (Kishinev: Shtiintsa, 1972), 91–138, esp. 95–96, 98–99.

206 See the groundbreaking work of the cultural anthropologist Fredric Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredric Barth (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), 9–38. Rather than being a fixed quality or cultural essence of some group, ethnicity consists of maintaining group boundaries on whatever criteria are selected in the interaction.

207 About the *Traditionskern* (kernel of tradition) or ethnogenesis theory of the “Vienna school” of Reinhard Wenskus, Herwig Wolfram and Walter Pohl and the critical reactions to it, see the sympathetic review of Peter J. Heather, “Ethnicity, Group Identity, and Social Status in the Migration Period,” in *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities*

Yet the scholarly consensus is that ethnicity was just one of many identities and allegiances in the Middle Ages, including territorial (regional), local, social, political (belonging to a political entity) and religious, and did not play the all-important political role attributed to it in the era of nationalism. Medieval peoples were not linguistically and culturally homogeneous and cannot be considered monolithic ethnic groups (and not at all biological units). They were ethnically heterogeneous. Not only could the dynasty (and the aristocracy) be different from the main ethnic element, but the population included various ethnic groups and individuals through conquest, settlement, political alliances, marriages or other ways. Political mobilization then occurred more around features such as the dynastic principle, social criteria (aristocracy) and religion. If political solidarity and mobilization occurred on an “ethnic” basis, this should be understood as a claim of leaders proposing their own “tradition” (by way of a “party” program) for the others to identify with and for them to garner support. And it is questionable whether ethnic identities—however they are defined—extended beyond the elites to the “people” (in terms of the debate: whether “national consciousness” existed).²⁰⁸ In light of this, let us draw our conclusions on the debate.

One can say that beyond the apparently factual (empirical) level on which the debate was conducted, there exists another and more general level of signification above the narration and the analysis of facts, namely the ethnic or “national” signification (and a vital concern). The “facts” found at the first level were taken as “proof” or “symptoms” that had to validate “Truth” at the second level, that is, the Bulgarian or Romanian character of a certain territory or state formation at a given time. In fact, the operations at the first level were

and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe, eds. Ildar H. Garipzanov, Patrick J. Geary and Przemysław Urbanczyk (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2008), 17–49, esp. 26–35. For a very critical review of the *Traditionskern* theory, see the volume *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Andrew Gillet (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2002), especially the introduction and contribution by Andrew Gillet and the contributions of Walter Goffart, Alexander Murray and Charles Bowlus. In the same source, see the exposition and defense of the theory by Walter Pahl, a contemporary key figure of the school.

- 208 Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 19, 37–40, 73–79, 118–119, 155–157, 172–174; Patrick J. Geary, “Slovenian Gentile Identity: From Samo to the Fürstenstein,” in *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs*, 243–257, esp. 252–257; Peter J. Heather, “Ethnicity, Group Identity,” 42–47. Heather argues the need to go beyond the “tyranny of ethnicity” and to consider other forms of group identity and political solidarity, such as social status (in hierarchically organized societies).

entirely directed toward the all-important second level. It is clear now that at this level, verity eluded both sides, and both were far off the mark. This is because (leaving the inadequate sources aside) both wanted to prove and actually presupposed what was not there—pure ethnies (or “nations”) and ethnically homogeneous territories—when in fact, medieval states were an ethnic mix or mosaic. Moreover, from their contemporary standpoint, they attributed too great a political importance to ethnicity as the commanding identity and a mobilizing force in the Middle Ages. The paradox is that both sides knew it but still proceeded from the nationalist assumptions of their own times, which were even reinforced in the heat of the debate. They were also wrong in assuming (even if implicitly) a continuity, if not identity, between “their” medieval peoples and their contemporary nations ignoring so many ethnic mixing afterwards in a sort of unending “ethnogenesis.” This is because, in the end, they sought national prestige and were keen on proving “historical rights” over territories in the present by their being populated by “co-nationals” in the past. Now that nationalism is in decline, the debate has lost much of its logic and urgency, and a more distanced analysis such as (hopefully) the present one has become possible.

The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans

Bernard Lory

In attempting to define what makes the Balkans distinct from the rest of Europe, one of the first elements that comes to mind is the length of time that the Balkans remained within the Ottoman Empire. Other parts of the Continent, such as Spain and Sicily, were absorbed into Muslim states, but this occurred a relatively long time ago. By contrast, the Ottoman Empire had a presence in the Balkans until 1912–1913, or barely 100 years ago. In what ways, specifically, did the Ottoman Empire “color” Southeastern Europe? This is an important issue for how the European continent defines itself as part of its unification process. The Ottoman legacy is regarded in different ways in Europe and is most often rejected. However, the facts remain, obstinate and immutable. The Balkans are in Europe. The Balkans have an Ottoman past.

The question of this Ottoman legacy has long been neglected. It seemed to fall to the Balkans themselves to clarify their relationship with their own past. Today, in attempting to develop a collective approach to European history, it becomes clear that the Ottoman legacy is part of a greater “melting pot” that concerns all Europeans.

This may appear relatively naive, an apology for what could be seen as a presumptuous attempt by a French researcher to take on a subject that is not only vast but highly delicate. Memories of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans are far from positive, and this foreign hand could be seen as rubbing salt into wounds that remain sensitive, even after a century. But then, who said that the historian’s craft was a straightforward or pleasant one? The passage of one century (and more) would seem to offer the temporal distance necessary for a less heated discussion. The time is ripe to reflect on the Ottoman legacy on European soil.¹

1 Historical reflections on the Ottoman legacy emerged gradually, not in the Balkans but in the West, with works by Wayne Vucinich, “Some Aspects of the Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” in *The Balkans in Transition*, eds. Charles and Barbara Jelavich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 81–114; Peter Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule 1354–1804* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1977), particularly the conclusion; Bernard Lory, *Le sort de l’héritage ottoman en Bulgarie. L’exemple des villes bulgares, 1878–1900* (Istanbul: ISIS, 1985); Hans Georg Majer, ed., *Die Staaten Südosteuropas und die Osmanen* (Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1989), particularly the contributions by Klaus Roth and Gunnar Hering; Maria Todorova, “The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” in *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint in the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. Carl Brown (New York: Columbia

1 Delineating the Scope of Memory

1.1 *Duration of the Ottoman Period*

The notion of an Ottoman legacy is inseparable from that of the Ottoman presence. However, the length of that presence varied significantly in the various regions of Southeast Europe. Most commentators round up their estimates to four to five centuries. But a closer examination shows that local situations varied greatly. In the case of Serbia, the Ottomans ruled Niš from 1385 to 1878 (493 years), Belgrade from 1459 to 1807 (348 years) and Petrovaradin from 1526 to 1691 (165 years). In the case of Greece, the contrasts are even greater. Didymoteichon holds the record, having been Ottoman from 1360 to 1912 (552 years). Thessaloniki was Ottoman from 1430 to 1912 (482 years), Athens from 1456 to 1830 (374 years), Chania from 1645 to 1913 (268 years), Parga from 1819 to 1913 (94 years), and Kerkyra never.

Cities have deliberately been taken as the relevant reference points, rather than states, which are too often relied upon. A state-by-state presentation enables historical tinkering, aimed either at shortening or lengthening the Ottoman period in a given territory, juggling dates that are supposedly historical milestones. Taking Serbia as a state entity, we see that the relevant dates can vary: 1389 or 1459 as the initial date, 1815, 1830 or 1878 as the final date. This is due to variations in the political status of territories during different historical periods. In 1389 the Serbian Despotate became a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire before being definitively absorbed in 1459; in 1815 the Pashaluk of Belgrade obtained an extremely vague autonomous status, which was not legally clarified until 1830; in 1878 the Principality of Serbia was formally recognized as independent. Depending on the approach used by the historian, the duration of Ottoman rule in “Serbia” can vary from 356 to 489 years. In the case of Greece, the most frequently used dates for Ottoman rule are 1453–1830, corresponding respectively to the fall of Constantinople and the Treaty of London that established the Kingdom of Greece. However, the territories involved in these two events are not at all identical. One concerns the basin of the Marmara Sea in the fifteenth century, and the other the Peloponnese

University Press, 1995), 45–77; Sylvie Gangloff, ed., *The Perception of the Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005); Frosa Bouchereau, ed., “L'image de la période ottomane dans les littératures balkaniques,” *Cahiers balkaniques* 36–37 (Paris) (2007–2008); and Raymond Detrez and Barbara Seghaert, eds., *Europe and the Historical Legacies in the Balkans* (Berlin and Bern: Peter Lang, 2008).

and the Aegean Islands in the nineteenth. Their only commonality is a certain trans-historical idea of Greek identity.

More often than not, Balkan historical discourse aims to minimize the duration of the Ottoman presence. To that end, the vassalage of Christian principalities is considered to have occurred during the Middle Ages, which is not necessarily incorrect, given that the terms and conditions of the Ottoman presence in the Balkans in the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century were quite flexible, adapting to the local circumstances the conquerors encountered.² As such, Ottoman rule is said to have commenced with the overthrow of local dynasties and the incorporation of the territories in the system of direct administration.³

After shortening the duration of the Ottoman period upstream, it is also possible to trim it downstream. The date of each decisive uprising is taken as the end of the chronological term: 1804 for Serbia, 1821 for Greece. And the date of official recognition of autonomy is used rather than that of complete independence (1830 and not 1878 for Serbia; 1878 and not 1908 for Bulgaria; 1898 and not 1912 for Crete). A phase of “national awakening” can also be subtracted from Ottoman rule and tagged onto the following period. In that way, in a relatively exaggerated manner, Bulgarian historical discourse dates the national awakening from 1762, and the Greeks date their struggle for independence from 1768–1774 (*ta orlofika*); Romanians consistently treat the transition period 1821–1859 as part of their modern national history.

There are even cases of outright denial. A certain Zagreb-centered Croatian historical sensitivity denies Croatia's time within the Ottoman sphere, refusing to take into account the *Sanjaks* of Požega and Klis for over 150 years. This is characteristic of a historiography centered on the capital of the modern state (Zagreb, Bucharest, Athens, etc.), considering the history of its “peripherals” to be non-representative.

2 Anthony Bryer and Heath Lowry, eds., *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society* (Birmingham and Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986); Klaus-Peter Matschke, “Research Problems concerning the Transition to Tourkokratia: The Byzantinist Standpoint,” in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, eds. Fikret Adanır and Suraya Faroqhi (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 79–113.

3 On the basis of this logic, Wallachia or Moldavia never succumbed to Ottoman rule, something that no historian would envisage. Nor would the Republic of Dubrovnik have been subject to Ottoman rule, which historians readily admit. One can also wonder about the situation of Mount Athos and even of certain territories that enjoyed an ambiguous autonomy, all located on the western side of the Balkan Peninsula, such as Montenegro, Himara, Souli, Mani and Sfakia.

On the other hand, however, it can serve certain interests to extend the Ottoman period as far as possible. Such a forlorn reading of national history can be used to glorify the suffering endured, in particular vis-à-vis the West.

The period of Ottoman rule therefore appears to be a bolt of fabric from which Balkan historians can cut the length of their choosing, creating a garment that is either short or long as they see fit. This is based on the premise of a homogenous “Ottoman fabric” that is of consistent quality from one end to the other. However, that is hardly the case. Historians of the Ottoman Empire are well aware of the major changes that occurred over the period of five to six centuries. The “Ottoman fabric” in which the Hungarian story is told (1526–1699) is very different from that of the Cretan story (1644–1912), quite simply because they do not correspond to the same eras. It is no surprise, then, that the memories of these two pasts are so different.

Here is a summary of the internal periodization of the Ottoman presence from a Balkan perspective:

- 1354–1402: First phase of conquest, from the taking of Gallipoli to the defeat of Ankara. The fragmentation-of-power phase for Balkan Christians, vassalage of many principalities; Turkish and Muslim presence still limited in numerical terms.
- 1402–1413: Civil war. The Balkans prove unable to take advantage of dynastic issues to defeat the Ottomans.
- 1413–1512: Second phase of conquest, from the triumph of Mehmed I to the death of Bayezid II. The Ottoman Empire expands symmetrically in the Balkans and Anatolia; the two halves of the Empire become balanced. The vassal territories are gradually incorporated; the Christian *timariotes* (*timar*-holders), initially numerous, gradually disappear.
- 1512–1569: Reign of Selim I and Suleyman Kanuni; the height of the Empire. The conquest of the Middle East and North Africa radically alters the position occupied by the Balkan provinces within the Empire, as well as the relationship between Muslims and Christians. A period of prosperity for the Central and Eastern Balkans; ongoing wars in the Western Balkans.
- 1569–1699: Key phase in Ottoman power. Political, military and economic processes grind to a halt. A minor Ice Age; demographic decline, devastating border wars in the West.
- 1699–1774: First territorial losses. The Morea and the Pashaluk of Belgrade come under Venetian and Austrian administration for approximately twenty years. Economic slump.

- 1774–1830: Centrifugal period. Local Muslim notables (*ayans*) free themselves from the central powers, some going as far as open rebellion (Osman Pazvantoglu of Vidin, Ali Tepedelenli of Ioannina). Christians take advantage of these problems to launch the first two movements for national liberation, in Serbia and Morea.⁴
- 1830–1912: The breakup of Ottoman power in Europe seems imminent. The reforms introduced in 1839, however, release a modernizing energy in the Empire, which Balkan Christians are able to take advantage of. Rivalries among the Great Powers (as well as those among fledgling Balkan states) slow down the final collapse. The Balkans' Muslim populations begin massive migrations.

This proposed periodization (which not all Balkan historians would necessarily agree with) is aimed at highlighting the major differences between periods and the lack of homogeneity in the long Ottoman presence in Southeast Europe.

This vision of the historian seeking to organize events according to a given chronology, in order to identify long-term rationales and a global vision, is not at all the vision of a memory-based approach. Memory operates retroactively, going back into the past from the present. For Balkan populations, the memory of 1912 is more vivid than that of 1878, and even more vivid than that of 1699, 1481 or 1354, and so on. Generally speaking, Balkan populations have the clearest memory of the nineteenth century, the century of national liberation struggles. The period of centrifugal unrest at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has created a smokescreen of repeated and long-term disasters that prevent any return to a (hypothetical) memory of a “happy” period of Ottoman rule (*Pax Ottomana*) in the sixteenth century at the height of the Empire.⁵

In fact, the notion of a “spontaneous” memory of the Ottoman period seems quite doubtful. Today, more than one hundred years after the First Balkan War, we can safely say that no one living in the Balkans has any personal memories of the Ottoman period. Family histories, highly stylized from repeated telling,

4 Most historians dealing with the Balkans do not consider the period 1774–1830 to be a homogeneous whole. We are here following Notis Botzaris's rich line of thought: *Visions balkaniques dans la préparation de la révolution grecque 1789–1821* (Geneva and Paris: F. Droz, 1962).

5 Bernard Lory: “Razsăzhdeniya vărhu istoricheskiya mit *Pet veka ni klaha*,” *Istoricheskio bădeshte* 1, no. 1 (1997): 92–98.

have indeed been handed down from generation to generation. This family memory focuses on buried treasures or property lost during dramatic exiles. However, this oral transmission is of little weight compared to the national discourse elaborated by the Balkan states with respect to their Ottoman pasts. When we speak about memory, we are referring to a set of historical facts that have been stylized by family stories and folklore, and even more so by literary works, textbooks, and the media, shared by a population that sees itself as the story-holder when it is in fact its receiver.

The Balkan peoples' vision of their own past is neither monolithic nor immutable. It has resulted from a series of evolutions, as the following will attempt to show.

1.2 *Principal Ottoman Themes Explored in the Balkans*

Which aspects of Ottoman history continue to influence Balkan populations today? They are in fact quite limited in number: conquest, resistance, the Janissaries, Islamicization and the glorification of the Church.

The Ottoman invasion is often seen as the last of the major Asian invasions. The Turks are thus considered part of the same continuum that includes the Huns, the Avars, the Cumans and the Tatars. They are depicted as a blind, destructive force pillaging and plundering everything they found: cities, monasteries, churches, castles. The face most often given to these plunderers has Mongolian traits; they were clearly formidable horsemen. The culture they bring is portrayed as highly primitive, and they are portrayed as barbarians.

This is a source of irritation for the historians of the Ottoman Empire, who reject any comparison to the nomadic empires of the steppes. On the contrary, they focus on the Abbasid and Seljuk legacy enjoyed in Mesopotamia and Anatolia over many centuries: city life, law-making, political science, architecture. They are, nevertheless, forced to admit the presence of a nomadic Turkmen element among the Ottoman troops. They are uncomfortable with the image of a destructive force, as it refers to an aspect of the conquest that they tend to eclipse: the "preparatory phase" of raids carried out by the *akıncılar*. This light cavalry drove raids deep into enemy territory with the aim of destroying its economic fiber, pillaging, burning and rapidly withdrawing with their loot and slaves. The *akıncılar* survive in German memory under the eloquent title *Renner und Brenner*. Because these raids occurred in enemy territory, Ottoman history does not consider them part of its scope. However, the territories ravaged by the *akıncılar* were incorporated into the Empire a few decades later and subjected to the Ottoman administrative system, whose sophistication and efficiency the same historians like to proclaim.⁶ The same

6 Halil İnalçık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia islamica* 2 (1954): 104–129.

agents of Ottoman power (the *uç beyi* who organized the *akıncılar* raids) are therefore simultaneously considered savage destroyers (beyond the Ottoman border) or wise administrators (within the border), a historical contradiction in which each camp focuses on the aspects most convenient for their own arguments.

The theme of the “final battle” is still very much present in Balkan memories. It is particularly alive with respect to two events: the Battle of Kosovo Polje for the Serbs and the fall of Constantinople for the Greeks. A vast literature has been devoted to these two events, which have inspired historians and folklorists, but also poets, novelists and painters.⁷

There is a consensus among today's historians that minimizes the importance of these events in their time. The battle of 1389 has left surprisingly few traces in the historical records, probably because, to the medieval mind, a battle in which the sovereign died was necessarily a defeat; Lazar Hrebeljanović was executed after the battle, but Murad I was assassinated. Furthermore, the disappearance of the rump state that was the Byzantine Empire in 1453⁸ had hardly any impact on the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean, much less so than the taking of Negropont (Chalcis, a Venetian possession in Euboea) in 1470. For the Turks the event still has considerable importance (even though Istanbul was no longer the capital in 1923). Every year on May 29 a re-enactment of the final assault is staged by the city's ramparts.

These two events lend themselves to an eschatological interpretation evoking the end of the world. The Orthodox Church has largely exploited this literary vein, both in Serbia and in the Greek world. Curiously, the “story of the

7 Much has been written on the battle of Kosovo Polje, particularly around 1989: Miodrag Popović, *Vidovdan i časni krst* (Belgrade: Slovo ljubve, 1976); *Kosovska bitka. Mit, legenda, stvarnost* (Belgrade: Litera, 1987); *Srpski narod u drugoj polovini XIV i u prvoj polovini XV veka. Zbornik radova posvećen šeststogodišnici kosovske bitke* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1989); Nenad Ljubinković, *Kosovska bitka u svome vremenu i u vidjenju potomaka, ili logika razvoja epskih legendi o kosovskom boju* (Belgrade: Raskovnik, 1989); Milosav Babović, ed., *Kosovski boj u istoriji, tradiciji i stvaralaštvu Crne gore* (Titograd: Crnogorska akademija nauka i umjetnosti, 1990); Sima Ćirković, ed., *Kosovska bitka u istoriografiji* (Belgrade: Zmaj, 1990); Veselin Đuretić, ed., *Kosovska bitka 1389 godine i njene posledice* (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1991).

8 On the fall of Constantinople: Georgios Zoras, *Peri tin alosin tis Konstantinoupoleos* (Athens, 1959); Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Donald Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Benjamin Lellouch and Stéphane Yérasimos, eds., *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tournant de la chute de Constantinople* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), etc.

fall" holds a marginal place in Bulgaria's national vision.⁹ For Hungarians, the fateful battle came in 1526, at Mohács, the "Graveyard of National Greatness."

In the case of Albania, it is replaced by the theme of heroic defense, embodied by a providential figure, that of Skanderbeg.¹⁰ Skanderbeg's death in 1468 is seen as a pivotal date in Albanian history, marking the beginning of the Ottoman period. Historians of the Ottoman Empire are more inclined to adopt the date of 1430 (the creation of *Sancak-i Arvanit*), 1478 (the taking of Shkodër) or 1501 (the taking of Durrës). The hero dies of fever, without having been defeated, as was the case for Alexander the Great. He was the only Balkan personality of the fifteenth century to have enjoyed true European glory during his lifetime, and even after his death.¹¹ He can barely be compared in terms of military glory with John Hunyadi, who is claimed by both Hungarians (as János Hunyadi) and Romanians (as Iancu de Hunedoara), or Stefan the Great of Moldavia.¹² The theme of anti-Ottoman struggle, but one without a final fall, is at the very heart of Montenegrin identity: there is no specific hero of the resistance, as it is the people as a whole who are glorified.

Once the Balkans fell under Ottoman control, the discourse continues in the heroic-tragic vein, focusing almost entirely on resistance to Ottoman occupation. There are no conspiracies or uprisings (before the nineteenth century) that have really entered popular memory. By contrast, the theme of the hero rebelling against injustice, taking up arms and heading for the mountains to fight the enemy, enjoys extraordinary popularity. The *hajduk*, the *klepht* and the *uskok* are historical characters that are particularly prominent in villager or regional memories. These characters are known mostly through oral traditions, conveyed by a large body of popular songs and legends, that started to be collected from the nineteenth century onwards.

The attempts made to give the *hajduci* a documented historical and scientific consistency have, generally speaking, been disappointing. The documents contained in the Ottoman archives collected by B. Cvetkova or A. Matkovski¹³

9 This differentiated attitude between Serbian and Bulgarian memories was analyzed in detail by Evgeniya Ivanova, *Izobretayavane na pamet i zabrava. "Padnaloto tsarstvo" i "Posledniya vladetel" v natsionalnata pamet na sārbi i bālgari* (Sofia: NBU, 2009).

10 Oliver Schmitt, *Skanderbeg, der neue Alexander auf dem Balkan* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2009).

11 Montaigne opens his *Essais* with an anecdote on Skanderbeg's magnanimity.

12 Much could be said about the Vlad Țepeș/"Dracula" figure, which has been reinterpreted on countless occasions. While clearly a fascinating character, he had a reign that was extremely brief and, ultimately, of little significance.

13 Bistra Cvetkova, *Haydutstvoto v bālgarskite zemi prez 15/18 vek. Studiya i dokumenti* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1971); Aleksandar Matkovski, *Otporot vo Makedonija vo vremeto na*

describe forms of banditry that are anything but heroic. The approach taken by E. Hobsbawm, comparing the Balkans to Latin America, leads to the interesting concept of “primitive rebellion.”¹⁴ Indeed, the nineteenth century’s revolutionary romanticism drew on the symbolism of folklore. On the one hand, it was concerned with establishing a revolutionary genealogy and, on the other, with using the potential for popular mobilization arising from the image of the untamed rebel. Many popular novels have taken up the themes contained in the songs, to which they have added a dose of patriotism.¹⁵ Antifascist resisters during World War II also took inspiration here (the pseudonym of Karaïskakis was adopted by one of the first Greek chiefs—very close to traditional banditry; the partisan detachment to which Todor Zhivkov belonged took the name Chavdar).

The aspect of Ottoman rule that we believe most deeply permeated Balkan mentalities is that of the Janissaries. A brief reminder of their history: To guarantee a military corps absolutely loyal to the central government embodied by the sultan, raids or levies were conducted every three to seven years on young Christian, Balkan and Armenian boys. Taken far away from their families, they were forcibly converted to Islam and trained to become elite soldiers. The most intellectually promising were selected for advanced training to become the Empire’s senior administrators. Their status as slaves of the Porte (*kapı kulları*) gave them significant financial and legal benefits. To ensure that these Praetorians, close to central power, were constantly replaced, the Janissaries were initially bound to celibacy. Over time, however, they became a self-replicating military caste deftly manipulating the wheels of power. Certain children born of *devşirme* (or blood tax, as it was called in the Balkans) attained the highest offices of the state, including that of grand vizier, and played a decisive political role. The institution of the Janissaries was particular to the Ottoman Empire and was not found in any other Muslim state, as forced conversions were explicitly forbidden by Islam. The last certified children’s levy dates back to 1705; the Janissary corps, which evolved into a military lobby that threatened the sultans, was brutally wiped out in 1826.

turskoto vladeenje, vols. 1–4 (Skopje: Mislal, 1983); Spyros Asdrachas, “Quelques aspects du banditisme social en Grèce au XVIII^e siècle,” *Etudes balkaniques* 8, no. 4 (1972): 97–112.

14 Eric Hobsbawm, *Les bandits* (Paris: Maspero, 1972; expanded edition, 1981).

15 Among the public’s favorites: Pavlos Kalligas, *O Thanos Vlekas* (1855); Janko Veselinović, *Hajduk Stanko* (1896); Orlin Vasilev, *Haydutin mayka ne hrani* (1937). The theme of the honorable brigand is not, of course, limited to the Balkans, as Yaşar Kemal shows with *Ince Mehmet* (1955).

The “blood tax” caused deep-seated trauma in the Balkan populations, as reflected in many popular songs. They revolve around the particularly romantic theme of recognition between a mother and a son or, even more popular, between a brother and sister. The theme of brotherly and sisterly love holds a special place in Balkan folklore (men are betrayed by their wives or abandoned by their mothers, but their sisters remain loyal come what may): the “songs of the Janissaries” explore the threat of incest between brother and sister, a transgression that threatened the cosmic order. Warning signs build up until the scene of recognition between brother and sister comes to re-establish the natural order.

In the modern era, many writers have taken up the theme of the Janissary, in romantic, nationalist or philosophical perspectives. The first historical novel in Slovenian literature was *Jurij Kozjak, slovenski janičar* by Josip Jurčič (1864). Based on the theme of conflict between two brothers, one good and the other evil, it was a huge success. Novels by the Macedonian Stale Popov, *Kaleš Angja* (1958), and the Bulgarian Anton Donchev, *Vreme razdelno* (1964), were also extremely popular. We even find a heartbreaking passage in Virgil Gheorghiu on the Other, the Enemy, who turns out to be a Brother, even though *devşirme* was never applied in Romania!

Beyond the historical reality of the Janissaries and the folkloric or literary constructions that accompanied them, the theme of children abducted by the enemy who turns them against their own families is still surprisingly topical in Balkan mentalities. It was rekindled at the end of World War I, when the Bulgarian army was accused of taking children from Greek Macedonia with a view to making them “Bulgarian”; at the same time, the rumor in Kyustendil was that the Serbian and Greek victors were planning to abduct all the young.¹⁶ Later, in Albania under Italian occupation:

One of the more successful programs initiated to win the hearts and minds of the masses was the sending of Albanian children to summer camps. The program, sponsored by the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*, was originally greeted with such hostility and suspicion that the first posters announcing the plan disappeared and many of the first children who travelled to Durrës and Vlora were accompanied by hysterical parents who were certain that they would never see their children again. The

16 *Rapports et enquêtes de la commission interalliée sur les violations du droit des gens commises en Macédoine orientale par les armées bulgares* (Nancy, Paris and Strasbourg: Berger-Levrault, 1919), 449, 451, 545–547; Georgi Tabakoff, *The Challenge of Freedom* (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski, 1993), 43–44.

parents cried that when the Serbs came, they took the children, when the Turks came, they took the children, and now the Italians were doing the same. One mother gave her small son her glass eye, saying: "When you are a man and perhaps free, you will come back and look for me. If you see a woman with one eye of this colour you will know it is your mother."¹⁷

The most spectacular revival of the Janissary theme occurred during the Greek Civil War, when the Greek Democratic Army transferred 28,000 children from the war-torn north to the socialist "people's democracies" of Eastern Europe. Athens launched a propaganda campaign against the *new Janissaries*, adding to it a modern concern for communist *brainwashing*. For the historian, the analogies were not lacking. The evacuation of Greek children (many of whom actually belonged to the Slavo-Macedonian minority) was indeed tragic, as some of the children only returned to their parents much later, if at all. At the same time, they enjoyed preferential treatment in the socialist states, and some were able to pursue advanced studies that their rural origins would otherwise have made impossible.

Certain commentators sought to revive this semi-mythical perception in the context of the post-communist transformation, presenting as a new form of *Janissariat* the scholarships offered by certain Western foundations aimed at training the young Balkan elite in democracy and liberal economics. The analogy here was forced, as it concerned not children but young adults, and they were encouraged to return to their own countries as soon as their education was complete.

The perception of Janissaries in the Balkans is of particular interest, as it touches on a certain number of themes that can be adapted to any particular context. A first theme is that of the "biological loss" of the nation. A predatory, enemy state picks off these potential procreators, thus undermining *the nation's "biological corps."*¹⁸ In another version, the Albanian historical narrative transforms the Ottoman period into a time of darkness, while also highlighting the fact that a large number of grand viziers were of Albanian descent. Behind the desire to proclaim national virtues, we see a more subtle concern for *Balkan hyper-adaptivity*. This is in total contradiction to the nationalist assumption that the people always defended their identity with the greatest resolve when faced with a hostile environment seeking to de-nationalize it.

¹⁷ Bernd J. Fischer, *Albania at War 1939–1945* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1999), 64.

¹⁸ The Serbian language has a specific term, which is difficult to translate, to convey this notion: *živalj*.

To overcome this contradiction, the idea was developed that, despite being plucked from their families, the Janissaries maintained a certain form of loyalty to their origins. The most cited example of this is Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (1505–1579), a Janissary of Serbian descent who, when appointed grand vizier, once again authorized the Serbian autocephalous church (Patriarchate of Peć).¹⁹ A final matter concerning the Janissaries, the most subtle of all, is the blurring of ethno-religious categories: to whom did the Janissaries belong? To their original Christian community? To the Ottoman sphere? To an alternative Islam that was more tolerant, more “European”—Bektashism? The reference to the Janissaries, in whatever context, inevitably calls into question definitions of otherness that are too clear-cut: the difference between “Us” and “the Others” is ultimately rather slim. All this makes for a particularly rich and fascinating topic.

A related theme linked to the Ottoman legacy is, somewhat paradoxically, the glorification of the Orthodox Church as a national institution. The “dark ages” of Ottoman rule are contrasted with the “the tiny flame” that continued to cast a feeble light in churches, monasteries and the “schools that can only be attended at night,”²⁰ preserving the continuity of the pre-Ottoman legacy. The church and religion are seen as a repository of the nation, a convenient role for them under a secular state, particularly under communism.

The famous *Byzantine symphony*, which is said to have harmoniously managed the tensions between temporal and spiritual powers through a close association between the Basileus and the Patriarch, was destroyed during the Ottoman conquest. Its spiritual component, the Patriarch, was endowed with additional functions, and its authority over the population rose dramatically during the Ottoman centuries.²¹ Nevertheless, as states gained independence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, temporal power regained the upper hand, and the communist era even saw an attempt to destroy the clergy’s hold over the population. In a defensive reaction, the latter tried to demonstrate its value to the nation, its role of protection and guidance during the Ottoman era. This is particularly obvious in the Serbian historical narrative, which attempts to present the Patriarchate of Peć (1557–1766) as a quasi-governmental institution. A national discourse with clerical and conservative undertones readily

19 Radovan Samardžić, *Mehmed Sokolović* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1971; French translation: Lausanne, 1994).

20 Theme of a popular Greek song that is often taken at face value in a simplistic patriotic vision.

21 Paschalis Kitromilides, “Imagined Communities and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans,” *European Quarterly* 19 (1989): 177–185.

turns the Ottoman period to its own advantage; heroic figures are put forward as neo-martyrs, and religious dignitaries are said to have led their people in the struggle for freedom. Romantic portraits provide an imagery that remains popular to this day (for example, “The Great Migration” and “The Takovo Uprising” by Paja Jovanović [1859–1957]).²²

Directly related to the two preceding themes, Islamicization holds a unique place in the perception of the Ottoman legacy. Indeed, this is concerned not only with a vision of the historical past but with one of today’s social problems: what place should be given within the national community to Islamicized populations, that is, Muslims whose mother tongue is the national language? The question does not arise in Romania, where the small Muslim community is composed of Turks and Tatars and is therefore not native. It no longer arises in Greece, whose Greek-speaking Muslims (Turco-Cretans and Vallahades from Macedonia) were “exchanged” in 1923, and whose Muslims are Turks, Pomaks or Roma. It is, however, of great importance in Bulgaria, which has to manage the integration of the Pomak population within an ostensibly unified national framework. Islamicization is also a central theme for Serbian and Croatian national discourse, as that is what determines the existence of the Bosniak people (called “Muslims” from 1968 to 1993), the third component of the national population that shares the same language but which has been unable to unite. For Bosniaks, it represents the heart of their ethno-genetic discourse: Who are we? Where do we come from? In Albania, finally, since the majority of the population is Muslim, the theme of Islamicization is more of a subject of reflection for Orthodox and Catholics than a debate that calls into question a common Albanian identity.²³

The Balkan historiography of Islamicization is considerable. An exhaustive examination can be found in the work edited by Gilles Grivaud and Alexandre Popovic, *Les conversions à l’islam en Asie mineure et dans les Balkans aux époques seldjoukide et ottomane. Bibliographie raisonnée (1800–2000)* (Athens, 2011). It shows how the historical discourse on Islamicization has been developed and expanded in different countries and by different political regimes. It also shows how traditional discourse, which is scientifically quite

22 There is a genuine problem when it comes to the iconography of the Ottoman period, which is generally quite limited and very tendentious. It is the Romantic period that was, alas, the most productive: these works of propaganda are still reproduced to this day as though they were documentary sources.

23 The writer Ismail Kadare, although from a Muslim background, has taken a very trenchant position against the Ottoman Empire and Islam, which he argues isolated Albania from its natural European destiny.

dubious, has been transmitted over a number of generations, so much so that it takes on the status of unquestionable fact. This 900-page work highlights the contrast between a Balkan vision, nourished by oral traditions, that presents Islamicization as a forced and violent process, and the vision of historians using Ottoman sources, for whom the phenomenon of social origins is much more complex: conversion of religious dissidents (Bogomil theory), the economic conversion of poor mountain dwellers, conversion by social opportunism in the urban environment, conversion in order to escape from slavery or to obtain access to a military career, conversion linked to preaching by heterodox dervishes, and so on. There are so many different facets of a complex process that the authors choose to develop, more often than not on the basis of their own convictions rather than the historical documents available.

Finally, the battle for national liberation is a favorite theme for the Balkans, and one that is simultaneously associated with its entry into the modern age. It therefore holds a pivotal position in the region's symbolic representations. Very early on, the narrative of the decisive insurrection took a canonical form, drafted by a number of revolutionary veterans or by foreign observers following the movement. It is a heroic story, typically binary in nature, setting a supposedly homogenous people in rebellion against the "Turks," whose otherness is routinely stressed. Great care is taken to avoid any mention of the fact that Christians and Muslims share the same language. At times, however, an alternative narrative appears, breaking with this rather simplistic scenario. That was the case in Greece, with the 1907 publication of the memoirs of General Makriyannis, an exceptional text that forces a re-examination of many aspects of national *doxa*.²⁴

The story of liberation must clearly mark the rupture with and the rejection of the Ottoman world, creating a barrier between two chronological phases that are to be distinguished. The focus in Serbia, therefore, is on the 1804–1813 uprising (minimizing the 1815 uprising), in Greece on 1821–1830 and in Bulgaria on 1876. However, these dates only mark the liberation of one part of the national community. It is well known that the struggle for national liberation continued in chronological terms until 1912, but there is no major historical narrative as such for this second phase, which is related to the phenomenon of *heterochrony* (see below). It should also be noted that the national liberation struggle depicted in the Albanian and Macedonian narratives, at a later date,

24 Partial English translation by H.A. Lidderdale: [Yannis] Makriyannis, *The Memoirs of General Makriyannis 1797–1864* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966). There is an excellent French translation by Denis Kohler: Général Makriyannis, *Mémoires* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1987).

focuses on the “battle against foreign national propaganda,” transforming their Balkan neighbors into adversaries that are as formidable as the Turks.

Do the Montenegrins have a “grand liberation narrative”? It is difficult to say, as their entire history is presumed to be an uninterrupted resistance against the Ottoman adversary. Nevertheless, one episode has acquired particular notoriety: the massacre of the *poturice*, Montenegrins who converted to Islam, which supposedly occurred in 1702. The prince-bishop and poet Petar II Petrović Njegoš made this the subject of his epic poem, considered a masterpiece of national literature, *Gorski vjenac* (The Mountain Wreath), published in Vienna in 1847. Today, no historian accepts the historicity of this legendary event.

Of all the historical aspects related to Ottoman rule, the struggle for liberation is definitely the one that is most celebrated in the Balkan countries. It has inspired their most popular historical figures, their most visited memorials and their most fervently celebrated anniversaries. From a regressive memorial perspective (which runs counter-chronologically), it is the first—and thus the most vividly delineated—episode to appear.

1.3 General Considerations

Beyond the specific aspects of Ottoman rule that are variously appreciated, a number of more general conclusions are also drawn.

The first is the essentially foreign character of the Turks, their culture and their domination. This is the theme of *Fremdherrschaft*.²⁵ It is necessary to establish a hermetic barrier between the invader-dominators and the native-dominated, as though no exchange or dialogue could ever have occurred at the human, religious or cultural level.

The principal complaint holds Ottoman rule responsible for the Balkan countries' economic backwardness compared to Western Europe. It is based on the assumption that, during the Middle Ages, the Balkan kingdoms enjoyed a level of economic and cultural development equal, if not superior, to that of the West.²⁶ This assumption is, unfortunately, based on very scant documentary or archaeological evidence. There is no trace left today of medieval Balkan constructions in timber. The few structures that have survived to this day are rare compared to Western Europe's architectural heritage. The reason, we are

25 An excellent analysis by Gunnar Hering, “Die Osmanenzeit im Selbstverständnis der Völker Südosteuropas,” in *Die Staaten Südosteuropas und die Osmanen*, ed. Hans Georg Majer (Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1989), 356–380.

26 It has repeatedly been noted that the Serbian sovereigns ate with forks at a time when their Western peers were still using their fingers!

told, is that the Turks destroyed everything: they must then have gone to great pains to destroy the palaces and castles that they refused to inhabit.

The economic development of the European continent was quite uneven, well before the Ottoman invasion, and the Balkans were never as prosperous as Flanders, the Paris region or Tuscany. On the contrary, reference is made to vast forests and farming communities, all signs of a low population density. This economic inequality is therefore very likely to have been present before the Ottoman conquest. Furthermore, the upheavals in world trade resulting from the major discoveries of the sixteenth century promoted the commercial centers of the Atlantic coast and tended to marginalize Mediterranean trade. Finally, the Industrial Revolution was based on coal and iron ore, natural resources that are not abundant in the Balkan subsoil.

This leaves the question of economic development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a disappointing record indeed. The proto-industry that emerged in the late Ottoman period proved to be incapable of competing with the industrialized world. As they gained independence, the Balkan countries were cut off from the vast Ottoman market, impeding their development. These contradictions are the subject of a brilliant analysis by Michael Palairot.²⁷

Among the many causes of Balkan underdevelopment, the tax burden and the dysfunctions of the Ottoman state clearly played a role. However, the end of Ottoman rule was not, in itself, tantamount to the magic wand naively hoped for by the patriots of national liberation struggles. To overcome this structural lag, drastic methods were employed: the Stalinist command economy model or the “shock therapy” of neo-liberalism, whose results, to this day, remain far short of the population’s expectations. Should the Ottoman Empire continue to bear responsibility for that situation?

Some Balkan groups, however, view the Ottoman Empire as a protector, and therefore it enjoys a positive image. The Bosnians, in particular, idolize the Ottoman period as a time of prosperity and great achievements.²⁸ This is also the Balkan historiography that relies the most on Ottoman archives and that therefore has the best-documented vision of a period that is poorly appreciated elsewhere.

The same is true for the Balkan Jews, principally Sephardi Jews, for whom the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries were an oasis of peace and prosperity in a long history of persecutions. Ottoman tolerance, which allowed religious

27 Michael Palairot, *The Balkan Economies c. 1800–1914: Evolution without Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

28 Mustafa Imamović devotes 42 percent of his *Historija Bošnjaka* (Sarajevo: Preporod, 1997) to the Ottoman period, in which he includes the nineteenth century up to 1878.

minorities to live side by side provided that they accepted their inferior status vis-à-vis Islam and that they regularly paid their taxes, responded to the modest requirements of the Jews. Recognized for their skills in certain professions such as apothecary or cloth manufacturing, the Jews of Istanbul, Thessaloniki and a great number of medium-sized cities carried on their communal and religious lives in peace, in contrast to their situation in the rest of Europe.²⁹

A certain Albanian national discourse holds that, given the threat of assimilation by Christian churches—Serbian in the north and Greek in the south—the Ottoman regime helped the national community survive.³⁰ It may even have facilitated the territorial expansion of the Albanians to the plains and forced the clans to structure themselves. This alternative vision of the Ottoman period nevertheless remains a minority discourse within Albanian historiography.

The last group to have unquestionably experienced better conditions under the Ottoman Empire than under the national states that succeeded it is the Roma. As they have never kept archives, their history is poorly understood and based exclusively on peripheral sources. They do not appear to have their own perception of the Ottoman past.³¹

Nothing of what Balkan memory has retained from the long Ottoman period is of real interest to Western Europe today. Nothing manages to retain the attention of the West or to arouse any real consensus. Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, what interests the West is the question of how Christians and Muslims can live side by side, a new question for which they turn to the Balkans, if not for an answer, then at least with a view to drawing comparisons. However, the Balkan story to date has only ever developed the themes of antagonism, confrontation and crisis.³²

29 Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982); Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* (New York: New York University Press/Palgrave Macmillan, 1991); Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Juifs des Balkans. Espaces judéo-ibériques XIV–XX^e siècles* (Paris: La Découverte, 1993).

30 An idea developed by Hasan Kaleshi, “Das türkische Vordringen auf dem Balkan und die Islamisierung. Faktoren für die Erhaltung der ethnischen und nationalen Existenz des albanischen Volke,” in *Südosteuropa unter dem Halbmond*, eds. Peter Bartl and Horst Glassl (Munich: Rudolf Trofenik, 1975), 125–138.

31 Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: A Contribution to the History of the Balkans* (Paris: Centre de recherches tsiganes; Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001).

32 This Ottoman pluralism has been analyzed by Western researchers, including François Georgeon and Paul Dumont, eds., *Vivre dans l'Empire ottoman. Sociabilités et relations*

This Western interest is, however, beginning to be heard in the Balkans. Indeed, it goes along with a certain confused desire to alleviate the environment of conflict that has built up over the past century or two. The harbinger of this new trend is a certain irenic rereading of Balkan pluralism where Christians, Muslims and Jews are seen to have coexisted in harmony. Since the late 1990s (probably as a consequence of the war in Bosnia), a new literary theme has emerged, built upon the idealized notion of *komşuluk*. This refers to courteous and cordial relations among neighbors that are based on a certain understanding of the Other and respect for their cultural practices. Balkan “multiculturalism” has suddenly become the word on everybody’s lips, with Sarajevo seeing itself as the incarnation of this new image. What, then, are these different “cultures,” given that everyone speaks the same language? Is this simply a question of the difference between baklava and strudel? Is it possible to speak of multiculturalism after five centuries of life in common within the unifying framework of the Ottoman Empire?

The discourse on *komşuluk*, which the war of 1992–1995 cruelly belied in Bosnia-Herzegovina,³³ is used in Bulgaria to defuse serious ethnic tensions inherited from the final throes of the communist era. The easygoing relationship between ordinary Christians and Muslims is contrasted with the brutal, “totalitarian” management of Zhivkovian politics. In an analogous fashion, after 1999, when Greek-Turkish relations underwent a significant improvement, we see an Ottoman nostalgia emerging in novels that pay tribute to the former *komşuluk*, embroidering on romantic intrigues that transgress ethno-religious barriers.³⁴ The charming book in which Orhan Pamuk revisits his childhood and adolescence in Istanbul³⁵ is full of melancholy for the elegant and decaying timber mansions of the Ottoman Empire, which disappeared one by one, replaced by concrete structures of little architectural merit. The Armenian past, hidden and painful for certain families subjected to Turkish “normality,” returns to the fore in the third generation.³⁶ After one century, the

intercommunautaires (xviii–xx^e siècles) (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997); Meropi Anastassiadou, *Salonique 1830–1912. Une ville ottomane à l’âge des réformes* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); and Bernard Lory, *La ville balkanissime: Bitola 1800–1918* (Istanbul: İsis, 2011).

33 Xavier Bougarel, *Bosnie, anatomie d’un conflit* (Paris: La Découverte, 1996), 80–88.

34 On the Greek side, novels by Rea Galanaki, Nikos Themelis, Mara Meïmaridi, Yannis Karpouzou and Vassilios Christopoulos; on the Bulgarian side, by Angel Wagenstein.

35 Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul, hatıralar ve şehir* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi, 2005); French translation: *Istanbul, souvenirs d’une ville* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007); English translation: *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).

36 Fethiye Çetin, *Le livre de ma grand-mère* (La Tour d’Aigues: L’Aube, 2006).

facade of Kemalist nationalism appears deceptive and unjust with respect to the Ottoman past, a past that is now distant and contemplated with nostalgia.

Is the theme of Ottoman *komşuluk* only destined to please the West and support the activities of well-intentioned NGOs, or does it correspond to the emergence of a new type of Balkan and Turkish sensitivity? At this point we cannot say. It is, in any case, still far from offsetting the traditional discourse on the Ottoman Empire, built on rejection and confrontation.

2 De-Ottomanization

2.1 *De-Ottomanizing? When and How?*

The notion of de-Ottomanization emerged approximately twenty-five years ago.³⁷ It operates in parallel to the notion of modernization or Europeanization of the Balkans, as two sides of the same coin.

While it is difficult to precisely define Ottoman culture within the Balkans,³⁸ the historian can observe an explicit and deliberate rejection of, or a gradual decline in, certain cultural practices that are associated with it. Eradicating the markers of an Ottoman memory is a lengthy process that requires several generations. Furthermore, it has not occurred at the same pace throughout the Balkan region. Attempting to establish a timeline for the phenomenon of de-Ottomanization is therefore not an easy task.

When can it be said to have begun? Did the Ottoman Empire not begin to de-Ottomanize itself by launching the first Western-inspired reforms? If so, then it began under Selim III (1789–1807), well before the first Balkan liberation movements.³⁹ The *Tanzimât* (1839–1876) represents a second phase in the same process. The Young Turks period continues in the same trend. The logical outcome of this evolution was to be Kemalist Turkey. Symbolically, the traditional Ottoman turban was replaced by the reforming fez in 1840, which was in turn supplanted by the Western hat, imposed in 1925.

This very linear reading, based on a Turkish republican vision, was slightly tempered by historians in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In particular, the less spectacular reforms undertaken by Mahmud II (1808–1839) have

37 Lory, *Le sort de l'héritage ottoman*.

38 Klaus Roth provides a brilliant analysis of the question: "Osmanische Spuren in der Alltagskultur Südosteuropas," in *Die Staaten Südosteuropas und die Osmanen*, 319–332.

39 Stanford Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

been highlighted⁴⁰ and the myth of the “obscurantist” reign of Abdül Hamid II (1876–1909) was dusted off. He was far from being the static and rigid figure formerly claimed.⁴¹ Generally speaking, historians have tended to posit a dynamic vision of the Empire’s partisans of reform who, in Balkan eyes, could be presented as the “de-Ottomanizers.” This interpretation is of course quite biased, as it is clear that the architects of reform sought to consolidate and maintain the Ottoman Empire rather than end it. Paradoxically, the reforms carried out in the late Ottoman period are seen as facilitating the emancipation of the Balkan peoples. This “debt to the Turks” is not readily accepted by Balkan historians. However, it is clearly not possible to understand power relations in the Pashaluk of Belgrade before 1804 if the general framework of reforms under Selim III is ignored.⁴² Similarly, the rise of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement can only be understood within the framework of the *Danube Vilayet*, an 1860s pilot project of Ottoman reformism.

Parallel with this paradoxical “de-Ottomanization” by the Empire’s reformist elites, the more diffuse opening up of Christian populations to the Western world should not be underestimated. This trend emerged among merchants and sailors, through contacts with purveyors of culture known as the *Levantines*, via Catholic and Protestant missions, and by the first Balkan students in the West. It is also necessary to highlight the important role in the dissemination of Western ideas played by the small Phanariot courts of Bucharest and Iași. The slow spread of works printed in the Balkans, which gradually included languages that had previously remained essentially oral, was also an important factor.

However, all of that appears quite feeble compared to the qualitative leap in de-Ottomanization that occurred when a given territory was freed from Ottoman political control: 1815, 1830, 1878, 1913 and 1923 were the key dates for this process. Providing a timeline for this is not an easy task, because the process began at different dates in different territories. De-Ottomanizing in 1815 versus 1913 required cultural processes that were necessarily quite different. For example, the Serbs of the Pashaluk of Belgrade continued to wear the fez until the mid-nineteenth century, whereas the rejection of this headwear

40 Michael Ursinus, *Regionale Reformen im Osmanischen Reich am Vorabend der Tanzimat* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1982).

41 Works by many historians, including François Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II, le sultan calife (1876–1909)* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).

42 Dušan Pantelić, *Beogradski pašaluk posle Svištovskog mira (1791–1794)* (Belgrade: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1927); Dušan Pantelić, *Beogradski pašaluk pred Prvi srpski ustanak (1794–1804)* (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka, 1949).

associated with Ottoman power was the first act of liberation for the Christians of Bulgaria (1877–1878) or Macedonia (1912–1913).

It is by relying on the notion of generation that we can better grasp the complexity of this process.

The first generation of de-Ottomanization, that is, the twenty or thirty years following liberation, occurred at different speeds. The process was very slow in Serbia (where Miloš Obrenović was often referred to as a “Christian Pasha”), quite gradual in Bulgaria, but clearly more rapid in Greece, a country that enjoyed complete independence from the outset and that benefited from a form of enlightened despotism by the Bavarian King Otto. This first post-Ottoman generation developed in the context of the Empire and participated in the battles for liberation. It was above all concerned with the process of *state-building*, for which de-Ottomanization was simply a secondary phase. For Bosnia-Herzegovina the first generation was governed by the semi-colonial framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and for Cyprus by that of the British Empire. For Albania, it was the interwar period that determined the initial phase of the process. The first de-Ottomanizing generation in Albania was therefore contemporary with the third or fourth generation in Serbia.

The end date of the first phase of the process can be defined as 1860 for Serbia (the death of Miloš Obrenović), 1862 for Greece (the removal of Otto), 1912 for Bulgaria (military confrontation with the Ottoman Empire), 1914 for Cyprus (the end of links with the Ottoman Empire), 1918 for Bosnia-Herzegovina (the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire), 1939 for Albania (Italian occupation), and 1945 for Macedonia (accession to administrative autonomy).

The second post-Ottoman generation did not experience life under the Ottoman Empire firsthand. For this generation, it is both in the past (in time) and foreign (beyond borders). The state framework of the young Balkan state was established, for better or for worse, often at the cost of coups d'état. National ambitions turned outwards, towards irredentist lands still under Ottoman possession. Territorial acquisitions by Serbia in 1878, by Greece in 1881 and by Bulgaria in 1913 re-triggered the de-Ottomanization process for these “new territories,” which were rapidly placed on the same footing as the “old kingdom.” The process was accomplished in an administrative manner, without debate, and with the quiet brutality of those who are convinced that they are acting for the good of others. Those concerned hardly dared to protest. For Serbia and Greece, this second generation of de-Ottomanization was a great success; for Bulgaria it was one of the two “national disasters” of 1913 and 1919.

For Greece, it was the following generation that met with failure in the form of the “Asia Minor Catastrophe.” For Serbia, by contrast, the third generation was one of triumphalism, with the Yugoslav kingdom considered the successful result of national Serbian efforts.

The following phase was simultaneous and no longer generational: the coming to power of communists in Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania and their failed attempt to seize power in Greece. The communist regime took hold in states that were already firmly established (Serbia, Bulgaria) or, by contrast, in countries that had barely entered their second, post-Ottoman generation, such as Albania or Macedonia.⁴³ This generational shock was epitomized by Dimităr Vlahov (1878–1953), who served as a member of the Ottoman parliament in 1908 and vice-president of the Antifascist National Liberation Council of Yugoslavia in 1945. The communist regimes were no different from the regimes that preceded them in their assessment of the Ottoman past. De-Ottomanization was rapidly pursued in a systematic, authoritarian and brutal manner in the name of socialist progress.

This was followed by the phase of national communism, which was also chronologically synchronized. From the 1960s onwards, it re-orchestrated national discourse and conferred a new style on Ottoman memory. This phase was most pronounced in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. By contrast, Yugoslavia, a multinational state, managed its Ottoman past in a different manner, formally recognizing the existence of Muslims as a people in 1968. The extreme nationalism of the Greek military dictatorship (1967–1974) took a similar approach to that of national communism. It revived the nationalist themes developed in the nineteenth century, including those in which the battle against the Ottoman adversary plays a central role.

The fifth phase, that of post-communism, was also synchronized. It was marked by the Yugoslav wars, by the international stigmatization of Islam after September 11, 2001, and, most importantly, by Turkey's new role on the regional chessboard. It was at this time that public debate on the notion of the Ottoman legacy emerged, at the very time when the Balkan states considered themselves done with de-Ottomanization.

Turkey's regional engagement since 2002 has awakened anti-Ottoman sentiments among the Balkan countries.⁴⁴ The fact is that concern for the physical remains of the Ottoman legacy, particularly its architectural heritage, forms part of Ankara's strategy of penetration, especially in Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia (but also in Romanian Dobrogea and Bulgaria), where restoration projects with great symbolic significance have been launched.

43 This also applies to Kosovo, Sandžak and the southern Rhodopes: all of these regions with significant Muslim populations suffered a particularly turbulent historical evolution during the twentieth century.

44 Darko Tanasković, *Neosmanizam: povratak Turske na Balkanu* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2010).

This period is also characterized by considerable intermixing among populations—economic migrations, trade and tourist flows—causing Balkan citizens to reconsider their stereotypes of Turkey. Placed in a broader regional context, the notion of Ottoman legacy could take on a new meaning.⁴⁵

2.2 *De-Ottomanization/Westernization/Nostrification*

The phenomenon of de-Ottomanization can be approached from various angles: it is neither homogenous nor unequivocal. It could be seen as a tree whose branch has withered; as the sap of the Ottoman Empire no longer flows, this dead branch will eventually fall off. Or the decision could be made for aesthetic or other reasons to cut the branch off, as it is no longer a living organism. But can we be sure that the Ottoman sap no longer flows?

De-Ottomanization is often presented as the flip side of Westernization, a concept that is inextricably associated with that of modernization. By modernizing themselves, the Balkan states are also de-Ottomanizing themselves. What rises on one side must necessarily subside on the other. Of course this assumes that there was never anything modern in the Ottoman Empire, that the East and the West are diametrically opposed. The Balkan states are rushing to catch up with Western Europe, essentially in economic terms, although reference is also made to a “civilizational” lag.⁴⁶ Going into overdrive, they attempt to rid themselves of what is seen as the deadweight of the Ottoman legacy.

Finally, de-Ottomanization can also be seen as another aspect of *nostrification*. This term emerged in Romanian political debate from the 1920s to the 1940s, but it could be applied to all the countries of the region. It is concerned with the development of a national character specific to the country, countering fears of “losing its soul” in an overly drastic process of Westernization. Ottoman legacy and Western acculturation here appear as two symmetrical threats to national identity. The Ottoman past, doomed by a historical evolution that is deemed irreversible, ultimately proves to be of less concern than brutal modernization. It is indeed easy to proclaim as “national” an aspect of civilization inherited from the Ottoman past and therefore adapted over the centuries, whereas the shock of Westernization is undeniably radical.

Perhaps the most comical example of nostrification is Turkish coffee, the traditionally prepared beverage that plays a crucial role in Balkan daily life.

45 This brings to mind, by analogy, the regional Alpen-Adria program, which in the 1980s relied on the imperial Austro-Hungarian legacy to develop an inter-regional cooperative network.

46 The Slovenes have the specific notion of *zamudništvo* to express this fear of lagging behind Western Europe.

After the 1974 Cyprus crisis, it came to be known as “Greek coffee” in Greece. Since the 1991–1995 wars in the former Yugoslavia, there has been some hesitation concerning its name, and it is often simply called “local coffee.” The spread of espresso machines and vending machines has led to a rapid decline in the preparation of Turkish coffee.

2.3 *Heterochrony*

We have seen how de-Ottomanization occurs over several generations. To this temporal gradation it is necessary to add a spatial gradation. The Balkan states were indeed built up gradually, by territorial expansion, around an initial nucleus that was emancipated very early on and then extended through successive annexations. For Serbia the steps involved occurred in 1815, 1833, 1878, 1913 and 1918; for Greece, in 1830, 1864, 1881, 1913, 1920 and 1947; for Bulgaria, in 1878, 1885 and 1913; and for Montenegro, in 1859, 1878 and 1913.

This *state-building*, the development of a normative national discourse combined with de-Ottomanization, occurred in the initial nucleus. It was gradually extended to territories as they were annexed. This process, involving a transfer of experience, has not been adequately analyzed but is assumed to be self-evident. However, in each case, we are dealing with a micro-Jacobinism, imposing its norms on “liberated” territories without any consultation of the elites, who may in fact be quite opposed to the process. That was the case with the Greeks of the Ionian Islands. They had never been subjected to Ottoman rule and so had difficulty submitting to the authority of the Kingdom of Athens in 1864, which they considered to be culturally less developed. It was also the case with the Bulgarian elites of Eastern Rumelia, who were affronted by the brutal manner in which the Union of 1885 was achieved by Sofia: some went so far as to use the term “annexation,” which is not entirely incorrect. It was even more the case in 1913 for Macedonia’s militants. After risking their lives for the national cause, they were supplanted by officials sent by Belgrade, Athens or Sofia, who were better acquainted with the administrative-political functioning that had just been introduced there.

The young Balkan states exercised a Jacobinism on their newly acquired peripheries that they tried to justify as part of the battle against the Ottoman legacy. Under the pretext of overcoming that legacy and “spreading civilization,” attitudes emerged that were almost colonial. On this point the case of Romanian Dobrudja is of particular interest. From 1878 to 1913, this territory enjoyed a special administrative status and was only incorporated into the Romanian state thirty-five years later.⁴⁷ For a long time Greece maintained a

47 Constantin Iordachi, “La Californie des Roumains: l’intégration de la Dobroudja du Nord à la Roumanie, 1878–1913,” *Balkanologie* 6, nos. 1–2 (2002): 167–197.

“Ministry for Northern Greece” concerned with the territories ceded in 1913 and 1920.

This gradual extension of the national model developed in the initial territorial nucleus was accompanied by a phenomenon of temporal perception, which to my knowledge, has never been analyzed. This is referred to here as heterochrony or, if one prefers, the time-travel syndrome. What does it involve?

A traveler leaving the nation's core, formerly subjected to Ottoman rule, goes to a territory that is still under or has just emerged from Ottoman rule. One of their first reactions will be the feeling that they have just traveled back in time, to the era of their parents or grandparents. Simultaneously, they feel they are traveling through a unitary space—their national space, which they believe is their country, their homeland. The incongruity they feel is attributed to the chronological sphere; it is a time lag, a heterochrony.

Sreten Popović provides an excellent example in his *Putovanje po Novoj Srbiji*, describing a voyage he made in 1879 to the towns of Niš, Leskovac and Vranje, located in territories that the Treaty of Berlin had just assigned to Serbia:⁴⁸

It is 4:00 p.m. and I am already in the streets of Niš, where we managed to arrive from Aleksinac in four hours, not counting breaks. It is Sunday, and the women are standing in front of their doors or sitting by the enclosures; they are wearing flowers, chrysanthemums, dressed in short waistcoats and *šalvars* of different colors. If their faces had not been uncovered, I would have taken them for Muslims. The *šalvars* appalled me immediately. If I had had the power, I would have ripped them off, so as not to see what I have not seen for a long time in Belgrade. By the grace of God, I came back to my senses and abandoned the idea of this sanction, recalling our situation in Belgrade not so long ago. After all, my mother and my Aunt Milica wore the *šalvar* 50 years ago when they went to church or left their homes, just as these Serbian women before me: dressed in *šalvar*, a turban on their heads and a type of *feredže* on their backs. If the old women who are in their graves came back to life, they would make the sign of the cross with astonishment at the costumes worn in Belgrade today, at these straight *anterijas* or these *fistans*, these *tuniques-muniques* and so on. And yet, in any case, the women of Niš must give up their *šalvars* as soon as possible, because they symbolize Turkish domination

48 I note in passing that the term “Old Serbia,” referring to the territories still under Ottoman control, had not yet entered into use.

and are humiliating for Christians; may the foreigners coming to our city today no longer think they are on Turkish land or in a Turkish city.⁴⁹

This feeling of heterochrony was reported by many Bulgarian national activists who came to fight in Macedonia, where they found themselves once again in an atmosphere of National Awakening (*Vǎzrazhdane*). A Bulgarian soldier contemplating Bitola in February 1916 wrote:

Below the city is delineated in white. It is dominated by a large number of mosques that give it an Oriental aspect, such as we no longer commonly see in Bulgaria and one that we can only imagine after reading the Orientalist novels of Pierre Loti. There is no frantic noise, none of the din and the crowds that have taken possession of the new towns.⁵⁰

This sense of a time lag could last several generations. It is slightly surprising to find it described as late as 1937 by the travel writer t'Serstevens. He was well acquainted with Kemalist Turkey and, on discovering Bosnia, wrote:

Two hundred years of Turkey left a powerful mark on this country that forty years of Austrian occupation have not managed to erase. Yugoslavia has remained more Turkish than Turkey in its Muslim provinces (...) It calls to mind the Turkish Middle Ages.⁵¹

Heterochrony involves more than an aesthetic perception, a form of temporal exoticism. It can also provide a basis for political analysis and action. Bulgaria's national activists who were devoted to the Macedonian cause became convinced that Macedonian society was reproducing, with a time lag of thirty to forty years, the entire Bulgarian evolution of *Vǎzrazhdane*.

49 Sreten Popović, *Putovanje po novoj Srbiji*, 2nd ed. (Belgrade: Srpska Književna Zadruga, 1950 [first published in Novi Sad: Srpska knjižara Braće M. Popovića, 1879]), 268–269 (my translation). *Šalvar* are large baggy pants gathered at the ankles. *Feredže* is a large, enveloping coat, usually black. *Anterija* is a kind of waistcoat with sleeves. *Fistan* is a type of skirt. *Tunique-munique* is an expression in Turkish that has also entered Balkan languages, meaning “all things of the same type”: the word is repeated, replacing the first letter with the letter “m,” producing a comical effect (*mühleme*).

50 Ivan Radoslavov, *Spomeni, dnevnitsi, pisma* (Sofia: Bǎlgarski pisatel, 1983), 201 (my translation).

51 Albert t'Serstevens, *L'Itinéraire de Yougoslavie*, quoted by Rechid Safvet Atabinen, *Les apports turcs dans le peuplement et la civilisation de l'Europe orientale* (Istanbul: T.A.C.T., 1952), 27 (my translation).

This was rather convenient, as it excused them from undertaking a more detailed analysis of the contradictions specific to the region. They would go so far as to imitate the Bulgarian uprising of 1876 (the April uprising), which was disastrous, but which national discourse had transformed into the culmination of the revolutionary movement. They organized their own uprising in 1903 in Macedonia (the Ilinden Uprising), which was just as disastrous. The model was replicated so faithfully that in 1903 it included a revival of the absurd cannons made out of cherrywood that were used in 1876 (which the Polish uprising of 1863 had already shown to be totally ineffective). This heterochronical reading of a *Vǎzrazhdane* displaced in time in Macedonia is still supported by most official Bulgarian historians.⁵²

The perception of time travel is partly due to the rapid evolution experienced in the young Balkan states freed from Ottoman rule, which left a powerful mark at the human level. However, it is also due to a misunderstanding of Ottoman society, considered to be static in its conservatism. It is assumed that Ottoman society did not change since the young Balkan state was emancipated one or two generations earlier. There is no doubt that social and economic changes occurred in the Ottoman Empire at a slower pace than in the fledgling Balkan states. Perceiving those changes requires painstaking analysis that is capable of revising certain preconceived ideas. It is quite revealing that precisely when the Ottoman Empire was changing the most rapidly, from the 1908 Young Turk Revolution onwards, the dominant discourse in the Balkan states was to characterize those changes as skin-deep. What mattered was that the Ottoman Empire in 1912 could be condemned in the same terms that were used in 1875–1878.⁵³

Heterochrony is a subtle way of discrediting the Ottoman Empire: it is not contemporary to the observer, it is already a thing of the past, it has been bypassed, it already no longer exists, and so on. However, this rejection simultaneously creates a powerful distortion, as the liberated Balkan acknowledges the existence of compatriots (other selves) who are still enslaved, living in this time from the past.

52 “The Ilinden-Preobrazhenie uprising was the largest military operation of the Bulgarian national liberation movement during the *Vǎzrazhdane*. It was the natural extension of the April 1876 uprising.” Konstantin Kosev, “Privetstvie ot Bǎlgarskata Akademiya na Naukite,” in *100 godini ot Ilindensko-Preobrazhenskoto vǎstanie* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2005), 23.

53 Bernard Lory, “La diabolisation de l’Empire ottomane à la veille des guerres balkaniques,” *Actes du colloque “Guerres balkaniques, conflit local et engrenage,” Bucharest, 1–2 June 2012* (forthcoming).

The year 1912 was the historical moment when the heterochronical bubble burst, when the position of the time traveler became untenable. Liberation was seen as a magical operation in which the clocks were brought forward. The war of liberation was literally a temporal plunge *in illo tempore*: Serbian soldiers kissed the sacred ground of Kosovo Polje, soaked with the blood of their ancestors; some believed they could see Marko Kraljević riding at their side. Bulgarians and Montenegrins believed they could abolish the Muslim interlude and pursue a forced baptism of their Slavic Muslims.

After 1912, they all—the recently and not-so-recently liberated—had to live in the same temporality, adjusting to each other. This process was painful, especially for the newly released, summoned to adapt to a new order over which they had no power. Integrating the former Ottoman subjects was not as easy as they imagined. The greatest shock was clearly reserved for Greek society, in 1923, with the arrival of over 1.3 million refugees to a “motherland” they barely knew. Their massive presence introduced a return of Ottoman culture to Greece: the Turkish language, Oriental melodies, and prohibited cultural practices (for example, smoking hashish or singing *rebetika*).

The end of the Ottoman Empire had another consequence for the Balkan political imaginary: it signaled the advent of a “closed world.” What is meant by that term? From 1830 to 1912, the European possessions of the Ottoman Empire were seen as potential territorial targets for the young Balkan states, in the context of a future regional hegemony. These territories were considered a sort of *res nullius* that they were free to take over. The official arguments used by the Balkan states to justify these claims were varied. Most often, the arguments were based on ethnicity: we are only taking over lands that are populated by our co-nationals (even when they were a small minority within a non-native population). To this were added historical arguments: in the Middle Ages, the authority of our sovereigns extended to this or that territory. Finally, the Balkan states called into play geostrategic arguments: maritime access, trade routes, the defense of national territories, “natural” borders and so on. All of this enabled geographical projections to be made, maps of the ideal national territory. As long as there was an Ottoman “vacuum” in the center of the Balkans, it was possible to indulge such dreams. From 1913 onwards, the Balkan countries became neighbors. The illusions of grandeur cherished in preceding decades could only be achieved at the cost of bitter conflict, no longer with “Eastern” invaders who were on the decline but with their autochthonous neighbors who were here to stay. The “Ottoman vacuum” was replaced by the Balkan “closed world.”

The folding back of the Ottoman past towards the East and towards Turkey also resulted in the Balkans being relegated to the fringes of Europe, making

them peripheral. The Balkan people see themselves as the last Europeans before the Muslim East. However, their position was quite different when they were ruled by a capital located on the Bosphorus. Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Albania and Serbia were part of the Empire's territorial nucleus (*Kernraum*).⁵⁴ The Balkans' position in broader supra-national bodies (Europe, Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East) depends to a large extent on the reading of its Ottoman past.

2.4 *The Agents of De-Ottomanization*

De-Ottomanization was not a spontaneous process that spread through society in a homogenous manner. It was triggered by the upper echelons of society, in a top-down process. The national elites considered themselves emancipated from the Ottoman cultural stamp, which they publicly criticized. The first intellectuals to think in national terms were also the first to point the finger at an Ottoman legacy that was unacceptable to the people. The press, that most modern medium of the nineteenth century, played an important role in spreading the discourse that would stigmatize the Ottoman legacy.

However, the group that was really responsible for implementing a program of de-Ottomanization in the independent states was the teaching profession. They were often the first in the village to start wearing "European" clothes. They made every effort to impose standardized linguistic norms, removing Turkisms and dialectical forms. They fought against traditional customs in the name of rational knowledge, patriotism and hygiene. This was truly a demiuric project, aimed at fashioning the new face of the nation, liberated from the weight of a past considered as foreign. Reference was made, not without cause, to *auto-colonizing elites*. Initiatives and directives were issued by the capital, which epitomized the nation. De-Ottomanization occurred in the capitals earlier and more thoroughly than elsewhere in the country, gradually spreading from the center towards the periphery.

De-Ottomanization also occurred through other mechanisms that are more difficult to distinguish, including compulsory military service.⁵⁵ Temporary

54 Klaus Kreiser, "Über den Kernraum des Osmanischen Reiches," in *Die Türkei in Europa*, ed. Klaus-Detlev Grothusen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979), 53–63; Andrei Pippidi, "Centre et périphérie dans le Sud-Est de l'Europe à l'époque médiévale et pré-moderne," in Andrei Pippidi, *Byzantins, Ottomans, Roumains* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), 153–175.

55 Bernard Lory, "Armee und Militärdienst als Faktoren des Wandels der Alltagskultur und der Mentalitäten in Südosteuropa," in *Die Volkskultur Südosteuropas in der Moderne*, ed. Klaus Roth (Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1992), 183–196.

economic migration (*gurbet, pečalba*) outside the Ottoman area was another. The development of audiovisual media in the twentieth century expanded the process considerably (consider, for instance, the impact of Italian television on Albanian society in the 1980s). Communist ideology, imposed in four Balkan countries out of five, was an extremely powerful factor in de-Ottomanization, especially for Muslims: though Christians already believed in de-Ottomanization, before the communist era Muslims were more or less unaffected by it.

3 Scope of the Notion of an Ottoman Legacy

3.1 *Determining the Ottoman Legacy*

To what extent do the Balkans admit the existence of an Ottoman legacy? The most radical discourse is that of denial. We find a relatively unforgivable example in the writings of the excellent specialist on the history of Orthodoxy, Ivan Snegarov (1883–1971):

The Turks were an uncultivated people in the fourteenth century, when they began their advance against the Byzantines and the Balkan states. Long after the consolidation of their state, they remained on a cultural level that was largely inferior to that of the Christian peoples they had conquered. While the Mohammedanism of Turkey assimilated certain aspects of Arab culture (religious architecture, jurisprudence), it proved to be a regressive force that kept the non-Mohammedan peoples under submission only by the power of the sword. At that time (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), when in Western Europe the human and natural sciences were developing rapidly thanks to scientific geniuses such as Copernicus, Newton, Galileo and Bacon, in Turkey a medieval obscurantism reigned.⁵⁶

In this version of events, the Ottoman Turks did nothing but destroy and plunder. During the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the subjugated Balkan peoples stagnated, restrained from taking part. The Ottomans brought nothing positive to the Balkans in the scientific, artistic or intellectual fields. At best, they are recognized for their military expertise.

56 Ivan Snegarov, *Turskoto vladichestvo, prechka za kulturnoto razvitiie na bălgarskiya narod i drugite balkanski narodi* (Sofia: BAN, 1958), 3, 17 (my translation).

A more moderate variant of this discourse admits that the Ottoman Empire was responsible for some remarkable achievements, for example in architecture or in the organization of the state. However, these merits are immediately discounted by presenting the Ottomans as mere imitators or even plagiarists: all of these achievements were in reality borrowed from Byzantine culture. The proof is easy to find: does Hagia Sophia not mirror the Blue Mosque? At an interval of one thousand years, have not the same architectural forms been used? This is plain to see for even the most superficial tourist. It comes as no surprise that the same concept can be found throughout Greece and is, in fact, a copy of an older schema: the Greeks were the true creators of ancient culture, and the Romans were no more than soulless imitators.⁵⁷

A third approach involves co-optation in favor of the national cause. Mimar Sinan (1539–1588) is undoubtedly one of the greatest architects of the sixteenth century. He was not a Turk but a Greek from Cappadocia (or a Bulgarian from Shiroka Lăka, according to a local variant). The theme of the Janissaries (of which Sinan was one) makes it possible to attribute prestigious (and thus enviable) achievements to the Balkans; the Empire is assumed to have functioned only by preying on its Christian subjects. The art of silver filigree probably comes from Iran, but it was the Aromanian craftspeople of Prizren who perfected it. This can sometimes lead to contradictory claims for the same Muslim personalities by two competing Christian historiographies.⁵⁸

Another approach, more subtle and thus less prevalent, is to say that of course the Ottomans had a sophisticated civilization. Their sumptuous jewelry, exquisite ceramics and elegant miniatures in the Topkapı Museum attest to it. So does Diwan poetry, which reaches the heights of refinement. But all of this remains confined within the palace, reserved for a highly cultivated Muslim elite with time on its hands to perfect the hybrid language of Ottoman Turkish, a blend of Turkish, Arabic and Persian. What did the Balkans ever see of these imperial refinements? The capital drew on the Empire's economic substance to create a precious honey, the benefits of which never spilled over to the periphery, be it Balkan or Anatolian. The Piri Reis map had already identified the Americas as early as 1513? How regrettable that all this enviable learning never found its way into concrete action!

57 A more subtle vision, that of a type of Turkish-Greek diarchy, is put forward by Dimitri Kitsikis, *The Ottoman Empire* (Paris: PUF, 1985), a short, provocative and stimulating essay.

58 Compare two attempts at parallel appropriation: Milenko Vukičević, *Znameniti Srbi muslimani* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1906); Safvet beg Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj carevini* (Zagreb: S. Kovačić, 1931).

3.1.1 The Millet System

The largest impact associated with the Ottoman legacy, the one triggering the most debate and that could possibly enable an *essentialization* of the Balkans (in what way are the Balkans different from the rest of Europe?) is the question of the relationship between politics and religion, or if one prefers, the *millet* legacy.

For a long time, the term *millet* was confined to a technical vocabulary of the Ottoman Empire. In the past thirty years, it has entered the “toolbox” for political analysis of a more general kind. The Yugoslav wars (1991–1995), in particular, contributed to its more widespread use. The term itself has its own history in the framework of the Empire.⁵⁹

Within its tri-continental territory, the Ottoman Empire brought together a large population representing many different languages and religions. The administrative structure of this heterogeneous population was built around religious criteria. Muslims, Jews, Orthodox Christians, Armenian Christians and Catholic Christians,⁶⁰ among others, were officially recognized communities enjoying a certain level of internal autonomy. The spiritual leaders of each *millet* (*Şeyh-ül İslam*, *Haham Başı*, Patriarch) were the principal contact points for the authorities, transmitting messages to their followers from the Sublime Porte or communicating complaints back to the Porte from their congregations. The privileges granted to non-Muslim *millets* were quite generous: the clergy was exempt from most taxes, it was entitled to collect taxes in its *millet*, it had jurisdiction over its members in matters of family law (marriage, divorce, adoption, etc.), and it was in charge of the educational system. The role of the *millet başı* (community leader), exercised by the Patriarch at the level of the Empire, was delegated to the provincial bishop and, to a lesser extent, to the parish priest at the village level.

59 Braude and Lewis, *Christians and Jews*; Michael Ursinus, “Millet,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 61–64; Paraskevas Konortas, “From Tâife to Millet: Ottoman Terms for the Greek Orthodox Community,” in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism, Politics, Economy and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1999), 169–180.

60 Many historians try to exclude Catholics from the *millet* system. It is a fact that, in the nineteenth century, when the *millet* system was institutionalized, with “constitutions” formally drafted by the Ottoman powers, Catholics refused to subscribe to this official framework. However, this did not preclude “*millet* relations” between the Ottoman powers and the religious hierarchy being applied to Catholics, as they were for other religions within the Empire.

The religious structure of the Ottoman Empire was very old.⁶¹ It had been formalized in 1454 with the appointment of the Patriarch Gennadius, at a time when a new type of relationship was being established between the sultan (replacing the Byzantine *basileus*) and the Patriarch of Constantinople, who became *millet başı* of the *Rum milleti*, the unified ecclesiastical structure of the Empire's Christian Orthodox community. To a certain extent, the *millet* system was also part of the Orthodox ecclesial tradition, with the autocephalies enabling religious jurisdictions to adapt to the political boundaries of the state. The *Rum milleti* benefited from the Ottoman framework to increase its regional power, to the detriment of the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria, by abolishing the Patriarchate of Peć in 1766 and the autocephalous archbishopric of Ohrid in 1767.

This centralization of religious authority (with its strong political connotations resulting from the *millet* system) conflicted with the political emancipation movements of Orthodox Christians. The young Greek state was endowed with an autocephalous church as of 1850. In 1863 Romania freed itself of the burden of the "dedicated monasteries." In 1870 Bulgarians obtained their own *millet*, the Bulgarian Exarchate, a hybrid ecclesiastical category that attempted to adjust Orthodox canon law to Ottoman political realities. The Patriarchate of Constantinople saw its territorial reach and the number of its followers decline dramatically in the space of two centuries. Today, it is no more than a quasi-anecdotal "Ottoman" throwback of contemporary republican Turkey.

In what way does the Ottoman Empire's *millet*-based administrative structure continue to influence the Balkans today? For centuries, the Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics of the Balkans considered themselves members of different categories, not only in religious terms but also in political and social ones. One did not marry into another *millet*. In different *millets* one paid different taxes and even had different educational systems. More importantly, a discourse of exclusion and otherness was used with respect to one's neighbors, even when they spoke the same language. Movement from one *millet* to another could only occur via conversion, and those who converted were considered turncoats, disowned by their original communities. Most common during the Ottoman era were conversions by Christians or Jews to Islam, as Muslims enjoyed more advantageous social conditions than other religions. Islam was thus seen as a "predatory" religion whose expansion occurred at the

61 This structure was not specific to the Ottoman Empire but part of a much older Muslim legacy. However, in terms of the Balkans, it was an innovation introduced by the Ottomans.

expense of the others. The latent Islamophobia of today's Balkans dates back to this balance of power imposed over several centuries.

It is necessary to go back to the *millet* mentality to understand the emergence of three distinct national identities—Serb, Croat and Bosnian—within a population that speaks the same language. Herder's concept of the nation, based on a common language, never really took root in the Balkans, despite a certain smokescreen developed vis-à-vis the outside world. Serbs and Croats, theoretically separated since the schism of 1054, attempted to include their "Muslim siblings" in the national discourse of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Given the failure of these attempts, the Titoist regime chose, after some hesitation, to recognize them as a constituent people of the Yugoslav federation, under the name "Muslims" (changed to "Bosniaks" in 1993).

The same difficulty in integrating Muslims into the national community was encountered in Bulgaria, where Bulgarian-speaking Muslims (Pomaks) were the subject of contradictory and often coercive policies. In contrast to the Bosniaks, the Pomaks did not have an urban elite, occupied a marginal geographic position and were numerically weak. As a result, their distinctive traits were not expressed at the ethno-national level. In Greece, the state's attitude was even more radical. Greek-speaking Muslims (*Vallahades* in Macedonia and *Turco-Cretans*) were expelled from the national territory in exchange for Orthodox citizens of Asia Minor.

The only exception to this treatment of the Ottoman *millet* legacy was Albania. Very early on, the slogan "the religion of the Albanians is Albanianism" was put forward. The definition of the country's borders resulted in a population that was approximately 70 percent Muslim, 20 percent Orthodox and 10 percent Catholic. The idea of associating the end of the Ottoman regime with the revenge of formerly oppressed Christians over Muslims who were now a minority therefore did not apply in the Albanian context. Did that, however, make for a smooth Albanian evolution? Absolutely not. In 1967 Enver Hoxha's regime prohibited all religious practices, the only communist regime to do so. That measure was attributed to the regime's professed Stalinism. However, Stalin never outlawed religion in the USSR. The radicalism of Enver Hoxha's regime was more likely due to a nationalistic desire to erase any *millet* barriers among the components of the Albanian population and thereby reinforce its homogeneity. In a similar manner, communist Romania forced the Greek Catholic Church (the Uniate Church) to combine with the Orthodox Romanian Church in 1948 in order to reinforce national unity—risking strengthening the very Orthodox Church that the Party was simultaneously trying to undermine!

The Ottoman *millet* legacy was felt long after the end of Ottoman rule, as illustrated by the “question of ID cards” in Greece in 2001. At the European Union’s request, the Greek government sought to remove any mention of religion from its ID documents as a source of possible discrimination. The Orthodox Church, however, took the lead in a major protest movement, arguing that national identity and religious identity were one and the same. Similarly, demands for an autocephalous church by the Macedonians (1967) and the Montenegrins (2007) confirmed the active presence of a *millet* mentality: even when recognized at the political level, a national community could not fully exist without its own ecclesial body.⁶²

For many researchers, Islam represents, by its very presence, the principal Ottoman legacy of the Balkans. It is clear that, despite certain sporadic incidents prior to the fourteenth century, it was the arrival of the Ottomans that paved the way for the introduction of Southeast Europe’s third major monotheistic religion. Reference was made earlier to debates about the issue of Islamicization (whether it was voluntary, forced or opportunistic). Another issue relates to the persistence of Islam after the decline and then demise of the Ottoman Empire. According to medieval logic, *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-harb* were categorically opposed: Muslims were not supposed to live long-term outside the geographical area occupied by their religion. Christians sanctioned this spatial division and, during the *Reconquista*, Muslims were forced to leave the liberated territories or else convert. While the Spanish *Reconquista* has been analyzed in depth, we know very little about the way in which a hegemonic Christianity was reintroduced to Hungary, Slavonia and later the Banat at the end of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, under the aegis of the Hapsburgs, or the Dalmatian hinterland under that of the Republic of Venice. The first Balkan countries to achieve independence proceeded in the same manner. Muslims were required to leave the young kingdom of Greece, the Principality of Serbia and various trading posts on the Romanian banks of the Danube.

The international rules of the game changed unexpectedly in 1878, during the Congress of Berlin, when the right of Muslims to remain on lands that had come under Christian control was recognized. How can we explain this reversal, which was contrary to the ancient division between *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*? In my view, the Crimean War (1853–1856), with its paradoxical alliance between the Ottoman Empire, France and Great Britain—under which

62 The Ottoman Empire was not alone in practicing religious discrimination. One should not forget the overtly pro-Catholic policies of the Republic of Venice and the Hapsburg monarchy, factors that encouraged “religious nationalism” among the Yugoslavs.

the soldiers of these countries fought side by side—followed by the *Hatt-i Hümayun* of 1856, greatly contributed to integrating the Ottoman Empire into the “European Symphony.” Furthermore, colonial expansion meant that more and more Muslims found themselves under Christian administration (British, French, Dutch or Russian). The “civilizing mission” that was incumbent upon the European powers was transposed, on a smaller scale, to the young Balkan states with respect to the territories they obtained under the Berlin Treaty. Despite the treaty, Serbia and Greece arranged for the emigration of Muslims living in their new territorial acquisitions. Romania and Montenegro were required to manage a new relationship with their fellow Muslim citizens. The most delicate case was that of Bulgaria, a new state that was barely formed and which “inherited” a large Muslim population, both Turkish- and Bulgarian-speaking. Bulgaria’s rather disorganized policy vis-à-vis its Muslim minority (-ies), which continues to the present day (having gone through the mandatory name-changing campaign of 1984–1985), can be explained by the shift in the international paradigm that occurred in 1878.

The old notion of *Dar al-Islam* did not, however, disappear in 1878, and the idea of living under Christian rule was intolerable for many Balkan Muslims. Emigration for religious reasons was considered a praiseworthy act in the Muslim world, replicating the *Hijra* of the Prophet leaving his native city, Mecca, in order to freely practice his religion at Medina. These religious refugees (*muhacirs*) were welcomed with compassion in the territories that remained Ottoman. Determining the number of Muslims who left the Balkans *motu proprio* or under pressure of hostile Christian governments is the subject of a historical debate that will probably never be resolved.

The disentanglement of Balkan Christians and Balkan Muslims was renewed with each new war, often dramatically, but also continued in a smoother and more peaceful manner between the wars. The terrifying ethnic cleansing the Serbs carried out in 1991–1995 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the ethnic cleansing they subsequently suffered in 1999 in Kosovo, is part of this long history of violence and exile.

In any case, Islam remains very present in the Balkans,⁶³ in populations speaking very different languages and enjoying very different political status. In Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Islam is in the majority and an important element of national identity. In Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria and

63 Alexandre Popovic, *L’islam balkanique. Les musulmans du Sud-Est européen dans la période post-ottomane* (Berlin and Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986); Xavier Bougarel and Nathalie Clayer, eds., *Le nouvel islam balkanique. Les musulmans acteurs du post-communisme 1990–2000* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001).

Romania, it is in the minority and non-native.⁶⁴ These are some of the many different scenarios that have to be managed in the relationship between state and religion.

Certain analysts have gone so far as to characterize these Muslim populations as an Ottoman legacy in themselves.⁶⁵ This is a perilous argument, as it could result in a denial of their indigenous, Balkan and European nature.

3.2 *Architecture*

Much of the debate on the Ottoman legacy focuses on architecture, as this is the area where the most spectacular achievements remain visible to this day.⁶⁶ Bridges hold a place of honor in the Balkan imaginary related to the Ottoman period (*The Ballad of the Arta Bridge*; *The Bridge on the Drina* by Ivo Andrić; *The Three-Arched Bridge* by Ismail Kadare). Those that remain in Mostar, Višegrad, Svilegrad, Arta, or Mes near Shkodër still inspire admiration today for their bold lines or robust power. This heritage, of incontestable utility and shared by all users regardless of their language or religion, has survived the centuries. The

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- 64 This is not to deny the existence of Bulgarian-speaking or Macedonian-speaking Muslims.
- 65 William Lockwood, "Living Legacy of the Ottoman Empire: The Serbo-Croat Speaking Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina," in *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds*, eds. Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun and Béla K. Király (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 209–225. The anthropologist relates his observations in the field at the time the Muslims of Bosnia were affirmed as a nation. He concludes: "The social organization of the Bosnian Muslims—and by extension Bosnian Muslim society and culture as a whole—is not Turkish, nor South Slav Christian, not even some intermediate form. Elements from both contributing sources were integrated, in line with the unique history of the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to create something new and distinctive" (222).
- 66 Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi provides a fundamental analysis of Ottoman architecture in the Balkans: *Avrupa'da osmanlı mimârî eserleri*, vols. 1–4 (Istanbul: Istanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1979–1982), an immense overview, country by country, of preserved architectural works, providing a description but also all manner of information to be found in the Ottoman archives. Works by Machiel Kiel, in a more monographic vein, have also made a significant contribution to our knowledge of the Balkan heritage: *Studies in the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1990); *Ottoman Architecture in Albania, 1385–1912* (Istanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1990). See also Győző Gerő, *Az oszmán-török építészet Magyarországon. Dzsámik, türbek, fürdők* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980); Michael Weithmann, "Osmanisch-türkische Baudendenkmäler auf der Halbinsel Morea. Beiträge zur Inventarisierung und Bibliographie," *Münchener Zeitschrift für Balkanologie* 7–8 (1991): 219–275; Dimana Trankova, Anthony Georgieff and Hristo Matanov: *A Guide to Ottoman Bulgaria* (Sofia: Vagabond Media, 2011).

presence of a monumental commemorative plaque in Ottoman Turkish can be quite controversial.

The fact that structures of such obvious public utility as fountains were the subject of vandalism in the Balkans and that so few of them have survived there is rather astonishing.⁶⁷ A practical explanation: responsibility for maintaining the water-supply network was transferred from customary artisans (*suyolcu*) to municipalities, resulting in the loss of traditional know-how. An ideological explanation: Ottoman fountains marked the location of places of worship (mosques) and thus had a religious connotation; they often featured a plaque commemorating a charitable act (*sevap*) by the donor.

Along with clock towers (*sahat kule*), public baths (*hamam*) were relatively likely to survive, and their stout silhouettes, adorned with several domes, still brighten the urban landscape of many Balkan cities. They are rarely in use today, having been converted to shopping arcades or cultural centers. Tellingly, it is necessary to go to Budapest, the capital least uncomfortable about its Ottoman past, in order to relax in hot baths under superb sixteenth-century vaulted ceilings. Monumental constructions related to major trading routes (caravanserais, *bedesten*) or to public philanthropy (*imaret*) have more rarely survived. By contrast, the public buildings of the *Tanzimât* era (schools, hospitals, barracks), built according to the principles of Western architecture, remain in use, their Ottoman origins largely ignored by the population.

Fortresses are a special case. In strategically significant locations they often predated the Ottoman conquest. They changed hands over time and underwent many alterations, so that the Ottoman contribution was combined with Austrian or Venetian elements. More often than not, they retained their military function in the post-Ottoman era and have recently been included in national heritage registers.⁶⁸ It is telling that within Serbia's 1878 borders, in the Balkan territory that has most systematically erased any vestige of the Ottoman Empire, this military architecture has survived relatively intact (Kalemegdan, Niš, Kladovo). Decisions to restore buildings and strategies to attract tourists have focused on the use of those buildings during Christian eras. The fact that the Catholic chapel of the Fortress of Klis (near Split) was initially a mosque is conveniently omitted.

Mosques represent the real challenge in heritage terms. They symbolize the Muslim religion that dominated the region for several centuries and that has left only negative memories. Dozens of fine cylindrical minarets dominated the urban landscapes of the nineteenth century. The call to prayer was heard

67 For example, Henri Belle, *Trois années en Grèce* (Paris: Hachette, 1881), 48, 70, 190, 310.

68 David Nicolle, *Ottoman Fortifications 1300–1700* (Oxford: Osprey, 2010).

five times a day, while the ringing of church bells was prohibited. The superficial traveler sees all mosques as identical, with a square floor plan and a central dome, with or without a portico. A closer look, however, allows us to distinguish the ancient style of the fifteenth century, sober and massive, from the elegant maturity of the sixteenth and the graceful and decorative style of the eighteenth. Machiel Kiel's in-depth analysis refers to both the conservative trends of the provinces and the more spectacular mathematical creations transcribed in stone (the *hurûfi* current). Architectural masters from afar were called in to design certain Balkan mosques: Sarajevo's Gazi Husrev-beg mosque is the work of Ajem Esir Ali from Tabriz (who died in 1538) and was based on a complex series of interlocking domes and half-domes.

In the towns or villages abandoned by their Muslim populations, the mosques rapidly disappeared. In some cases, they were converted to warehouses or auditoriums, ensuring their survival (for example, in Nafplio). In extremely rare cases, the mosques were converted into Christian places of worship (Đakovo, Drniš, Sofia, Kavala, Pylos).⁶⁹

In areas that were home to different populations, former churches that had been converted to mosques once again became places of Christian worship. The Muslim population, often in numerical decline, was not able to maintain all of these places of worship. The economic model on which the mosques were run (the *wakf* or *vakıf* system) was modified or abolished. More modest buildings were abandoned in favor of a principal mosque, as many of the *mescits* were simple wattle-and-daub constructions. Abandoned, the buildings deteriorated and disappeared in a matter of decades. The municipal authorities arranged for their demolition, supposedly for reasons of urban planning. A tacit anti-Muslim vandalism was thereby disguised under communist authoritarianism. Mosques were also heavily targeted during the 1992–1995 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina: among the most regrettable losses were Aladža Džamija (1551) in Foča and Ferhadija (1579) in Banja Luka.

Whether Muslim places of worship should be opened, or reopened, in Balkan capitals is the subject of heated debate today. The large number of foreign Muslim diplomats and businesspeople (in addition to resident Muslims) means that Belgrade's one and only mosque is much too small (Bajrakli Džamija, 1690), as is that of Sofia (Banjabaši Džamija, 1576). In Athens the debate continues: plans are underway to build a large mosque on the outskirts

69 Once an Ottoman territory was conquered (for example, Western Thrace in 1912–1913), many mosques were taken over by Christians for their own worship. However, this was more to symbolize the change in regime: the buildings were either rapidly returned or demolished to make room for a “genuine” church.

of this metropolis rather than rededicating one or two small mosques located in the central Monastiraki district to Muslim worship. Clearly, the mosque is the focus of all the contradictions to be found in the Balkan countries with respect to their Ottoman pasts. These are buildings that no one wants to see or hear and that no one wants to appreciate aesthetically or considers worthy of interest. Curiously enough, other Islamic buildings, such as the *medrese* (advanced Koranic schools), the *tekke* (Dervish prayer centers) or the *türbe* (saints' tombs), do not arouse the same passion.

The Ottoman architectural heritage in the Balkans was greatly neglected in the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, especially in Greece and Bulgaria. It was barely appreciated and poorly understood. Recent decades have seen efforts to save those vestiges that are not yet irretrievably lost. The "Ljubljana Process" launched in 2003 by the Council of Europe and the European Commission, intended to restore the architectural and archaeological heritage of Southeast Europe, has registered several Ottoman sites among its twenty-six "Consolidated Projects."

It should be clear by now that all the architectural works referred to above were built at the initiative of the state, of senior Ottoman personalities or through Muslim religious and philanthropic efforts. No one has thought to include the many Balkan churches that were built between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries under the heading "Ottoman architecture." Apart from a few homes of Muslim notables (*konak*), domestic architecture is usually presented as "national" architecture.⁷⁰ The art of the Balkan Christians during the Ottoman era is considered a separate category from Muslim art of the same period. This can be understood from an ideological perspective but is much more difficult to justify from an art history perspective. The charming Bajrakli Džamija mosque in Samokov is inseparable from the rich Christian homes of Plovdiv that were built at the same time; the Western Macedonian churches featuring blind cupolas (St. Jovan Bigorski, Lazaropole) are, technically speaking, little more than modified mosques. What rationale can be used to justify this separation of post-Byzantine art from Ottoman art, given that the very same authors often highlight the fact that Ottoman architecture borrowed heavily from the Byzantine? This paradox is even more evident in the applied arts. Will the very same copper trays, the same ewers (*ibrik*) or the same finely

70 An eloquent example is provided by the remarkable book *Architecture traditionnelle des pays balkaniques* (Athens: Melissa, n.d.) which juxtaposes six national monographs: photographs, plans and texts, all pointing to the fact that we are dealing with a single artistic vocabulary. However, the work shies from any attempt at a synthesis.

inlaid daggers or pistols be presented as Ottoman art or as Greek, Albanian or Bulgarian art?

Conflicting approaches are taken to the history of art in the Balkans, at times diachronic (for example, iconic art whose history can be traced from the sixth century to the present day), at times geographic (for example, the widespread use in the Balkans of Middle Eastern shapes), at times national (any art form present in the territory of the national state, from prehistory to the present day). The category of "Ottoman art" has temporal and spatial dimensions, as well as political ones, resulting in considerable misunderstanding.

Beyond architecture, the Ottoman period also left an approach to urban planning that was barely modified before the advent of the communist period. This took the form of a contrast between the town center, devoted to trade, crafts and public activities (*çarşı*, *çarşıja* or what Westerners call the bazaar) and purely residential neighborhoods, often separated according to religious community (*mahalle*). Ottoman cities were not walled cities, and thus a loose urban fabric resulted, with spacious homes surrounded by greenery. The densification of housing and the construction of high-rise buildings only emerged as an urban model during the second half of the twentieth century. Today, only the well-trained eye is able to detect traces of a very different architectural design among the concrete, glass and steel of contemporary urban environments.⁷¹

3.3 *Language*

Linguistic practices in the Balkans during the Ottoman era remain a vast field of study for which the groundwork has barely begun. What did it mean to be a polyglot in a multi-ethnic Empire? Were certain languages dominant? Turkish? Greek? Were all regions and all social strata impacted by polyglossia in the same way?⁷²

The language question was highly ideologized from the nineteenth century onwards, with the development of the concept of the nation. Thereafter the "mother" tongue or "national" tongue became one of the main pillars of collective identity. Everything suggests that in the pre-national period, and even beyond, the Balkans handled the question of inter-community understanding with great pragmatism, using a range of linguistic practices: code-switching, borrowing, phonetic adaptation, calque, and so on. It is also important

71 Divna Djurić-Zamolo, *Beograd kao orijentalna varoš pod turcima 1521–1867* (Belgrade: Muzej grada Beograda, 1977); Molly Mackenzie, *Turkish Athens: The Forgotten Centuries 1456–1832* (Reading, Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 1992).

72 Bernard Lory, "Parler turc dans les Balkans au XIX^e siècle," in *Vivre dans l'Empire ottoman*, 237–249.

to remember that the Balkan languages were codified only much later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Turkish—the language of power and the authorities, the language of the bulk of urban populations but also of many villages throughout the Balkan provinces, the reference language for Muslims of the peninsula (along with Arabic and, to a much smaller extent, Persian)—played an important role as cultural mediator. A minimum knowledge of Turkish was essential for dealings with the authorities or for trade: approximately fifty words were necessary for bargaining. In reality, it is highly likely that the Balkan populations were massively bilingual with Turkish, demonstrating a considerable knowledge of the language, and for consecutive generations. The traces left by Turkish on the Balkan languages are therefore considerable, especially in terms of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions.⁷³ The suffix used to form occupational names (*-ci*, *-çi*), for example, remains prevalent.⁷⁴ Even certain grammatical structures were adopted, such as the inferential past tense (the suffix *-miş* in Turkish), taken up in Bulgarian and Macedonian. Turkish phonetic characteristics were also adapted to the Balkan languages (the *ı*, *ö*, *ü* vowels; palato-alveolar fricatives transformed into sibilants in Greek, etc.), tonic accents were often shifted, and suffixes were added to determine grammatical genders. All of these adaptations mean that many words are no longer perceived as of

73 The first synthetic reflection on Turkisms in the Balkan languages was by the great linguist Franz Miklosich, *Die türkischen Elemente in den südost-und osteuropäischen Sprachen* (Vienna: Tempsky, 1884–1890). Many analyses, language by language, have followed: Lazar Saineanu, *Elemente turcești în limba română* (Bucharest: Tipografia Academiei Române, 1885); Petar Skok, “Prilozi proučavanju turcizma u srpskohrvatskom jeziku,” *Slavia* 15 (Prague) (1937–1938); Ivan Esih, *Turcizmi. Rječnik turskih, arapskih i perzijskih riječi u hrvatskom književnom jeziku i pučkom govoru* (Zagreb: Vlastita Naklada, 1942); Abdulah Škalić, *Turcizmi u narodnom govoru i narodnoj književnosti Bosne i Hercegovine* (Sarajevo: Institut za proučavanje folklor, 1957); Heinz-Friedrich Wendt, *Die türkische Elemente im Rumänischen* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960); Norbert Boretzky, *Der türkische Einfluss auf das Albanische* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975–1976); Olivera Jašar-Nasteva, *Turski elementi vo jazikot i stilot na makedonskata narodna poezija* (Skopje: MANU, 1987); Zsuzsa Kakuk, *A török kor emléke a magyar szókincsben* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996); Alf Grannes, Kjetil Rå Hauge and Hayriye Süleymanoğlu, *A Dictionary of Turkisms in Bulgarian* (Oslo: Novus, 2002); Rinaldo Marmara, *Lexique étymologique et encyclopédique des mots grecs empruntés au turc ottoman* (Ankara: Ministère de la culture, 2002); Snezana Gadjeva, *Les turcismes dans la langue bulgare contemporaine* (PhD dissertation, INALCO, 2009).

74 *Han* (inn) + *ci* is used to form *hanxhi* (Albanian), *handžija* (Bulgarian), *handzis* (Greek), *hangiu* (Romanian), to refer to an *innkeeper*, which has a more archaic connotation than *hotel keeper*.

Turkish origin but as fully integrated into the relevant Balkan language. The phonetic adjustment between the “standard” Turkish form and the borrowed Balkan one is often achieved via a Turkish dialect, Roumelian, which has now virtually disappeared: to go from *köprü* (bridge) to *Ćuprija* (a Serbian town), it is necessary to revive the dialect form *küpri*. It is estimated that the lexicon of Turkish origin amounts to about 1,700 root words in Albanian, and to 1,500 in Bulgarian. Idiomatic expressions are often drawn from a Turkish prototype: for example, in many languages “swallowing knocks” (*dayak yemek*) means “to take a beating.” Many Turkish or Oriental proverbs have been adapted by the Balkan languages.

As national ideology emerged, it endowed language with value, not only for communications but also for purposes of identity. In order to be a good citizen, it was now necessary to give up dialectal forms (markers of regionalism) and comply with the standardized norm as taught in schools and used by the media. The hunt for Turkisms was on; they were characterized as archaisms dating from the Ottoman period and vestiges of a bygone era. This was one of the forms of linguistic purism practiced in the Balkans; a similar process was undertaken in Romania or Albania with respect to Germanic, Hungarian or Slavic influences. Indeed, those responsible for codifying Serbo-Croatian (Karadžić, Jagić, Maretić, etc.) were more tolerant of Turkisms than of Germanisms.

Once again, this process followed a generational logic. The first national ideologues used neologisms that were explained, in brackets, by the relevant Turkish word then in common use: this was characteristic, for example, of the sermons of Sofroniy Vrachanski at the turn of the nineteenth century. Gradually, the Turkisms⁷⁵ were eliminated from abstract terminology, although they persisted longer in everyday language. Compulsory schooling contributed to their eradication, but the process was far from linear: schoolchildren still learned Turkisms from their uneducated grandparents. In that way, daily customs amounted to a silent resistance to the new standards.

In fact, not all the Balkan languages took the same approach to this Turkish linguistic heritage. Macedonian, which was standardized barely thirty years after the end of Ottoman rule, integrated many words of Turkish origin that had been rejected by literary Bulgarian for several decades—another example of how to differentiate between two literary standards. Similarly, in the

75 I use the term “Turkisms,” which is not entirely correct: some of the relevant vocabulary is in fact of Arabic origin, or Greek or Italian as borrowed from Turkish. The de-Ottomanization of the Turkish language under Atatürk involved the eradication of this Arabic-Persian vocabulary.

1990s, Bosniaks revived or re-introduced many Turkisms that Serbo-Croatian (Štokavian standard) had gradually rendered obsolete.

In addition to their archaic or provincial character, Turkisms also had a social connotation. They were often used as slang or colloquialisms. Since the 1990s, there has been a revival of Turkisms by the Bulgarian media. This is seen as a sign of “slackening” language standards that are part and parcel of a vulgar, post-modern world.

The most radical purge of Turkisms occurred in the field of toponymy. Hundreds of villages were renamed, either by translating their Turkish name or selecting a new one, more often than not with a powerful national significance. Very few cities have retained their Turkish names to this day (Medgidia, Pazardzhik, Kazanlāk, Ćuprija, Tuzla, etc.).

3.4 *Literature*

Can we speak of an Ottoman literary heritage? All of the Balkan countries respond with a resounding “no” except for Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁷⁶ This is a distinction worth exploring.

We can begin by noting that Balkan intellectuals are, generally speaking, quite ignorant of Eastern literature. At most, they are familiar with some of the major names (Firdûsî, Saadi, Khayyâm); only a few chroniclers from Ottoman literature have been translated, together with extracts from Evliya Çelebi that concern each country. Is it really possible to build up a “vision of the Other” on the basis of such scant material?

Bosnia-Herzegovina is the exception: although it was no longer part of the Ottoman Empire from 1878 onwards, it kept alive the tradition of the Orientalist scholar mastering Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian (Bašagić, Handžić, Šabanović, etc.). The official recognition of the Muslim people as part of Federal Yugoslavia in the late 1960s significantly boosted this small community, which, in its publications, was now able to address readers who shared its national values. Ottoman literature includes many anthologies (*tezkiye*) listing the names of poets and authors. As there are relatively few Muslim first names, pseudonyms are used to differentiate the authors. Many of these pseudonyms indicate the authors’ geographical origins, and it is therefore relatively easy to locate, within Ottoman literature, authors who are called Bosnevi, Bosnali, Saraylı, Mostarlı, and so on. Once these authors are identified, their works can be translated into Bosnian to make them more accessible to a modern audience. These Ottoman authors wrote in Ottoman Turkish or, less frequently, in

76 Hungarians, who have less of a complex about their Ottoman legacy, acknowledge the influence of *aşık* poetry on the great poet Bálint Balassi (1554–1594).

Arabic or Persian.⁷⁷ The *Biserje* anthology published by Alija Isaković (Zagreb, 1972), combining popular, Ottoman and contemporary literature, was quite a revelation for the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They took the books at face value, without necessarily grasping their literary value as works of Ottoman literature. The latter is based on literary criteria that are quite different from those used in Western Europe: it is not the originality of a subject that matters in determining the literary value of a work, but the stylistic virtuosity of the author. It is therefore possible to return repeatedly to the same themes: the nightingale sings his love to the rose; the moth burns its wings in the flame; which is nobler, the pen or the sword? All of these Oriental clichés, which were perhaps dealt with in a clumsy manner by provincial authors (according to Ottoman criteria), emerged as fresh, new sources of inspiration for Bosniaks in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Does this rediscovered Ottoman heritage amount to a Bosnian heritage? Are these *bosnali* authors, writing in a foreign language, really part of Bosniak literature? It is a question that can be discussed indefinitely (like “Is Kafka a Czech author?”). What matters is the existence of a living source.

The popular Bosnian *sevdalinka* genre is part of the *aşık* poetic tradition, with the central theme of unrequited love. It was part of the traditional courting process (*aşikovatı*) at the young girl's window. A *sevdalinka* museum has recently opened in Sarajevo, a sign that this musical and literary tradition takes its source from a heritage-listed past.

Another interesting example from Bosnia is that of Bašeskija, a modest literary figure from Sarajevo who wrote an annual chronicle from 1746 to 1804 in Turkish on the city's main events, followed by a short description of the personalities who had died during the year.⁷⁸ It represents an extraordinary source of material on daily life in a large Balkan city during a period that is otherwise poorly documented. Such chronicles were apparently also written in other Balkan cities. However, it is likely that they were taken to Turkey by refugees. We can imagine the cultural hemorrhage resulting from the departure of the Balkan *muhacirs*, who took with them the memoirs of several centuries.⁷⁹

77 Alexandre Popovic, “La littérature ottomane des musulmans yougoslaves,” *Journal Asiatique* 259, no. 3–4 (1971): 309–376.

78 Mula Mustafa Ševki Bašeskija, *Ljetopis (1746–1804)* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1968) (2nd ed., supplemented in 1987). The Ottoman literary genre of the funerary chronicle was taken up by Alija Nametak in his *Sarajevski nekrologij* (Zurich: Bošnjački institut, 1994).

79 On the question of *muhacirs*: Bilâl Şimşir, *Rumeli'den Türk göçleri*, vols. 1–3 (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1968–1989); Alexandre Toumarkine, *Les migrations des populations musulmanes balkaniques en Anatolie (1876–1913)* (Istanbul: İSİS, 1995); Justin

Hopefully, this Ottoman heritage will one day find its rightful place within a vast and common literary landscape.

In rare cases, Ottoman authors have been claimed by other national literary traditions. The case of Sami Frashëri (1850–1904) is particularly enlightening in this regard. From the Turkish perspective, he is the greatest lexicographer and encyclopedist of the late nineteenth century. From the Albanian perspective, he is a national ideologist, founder of the Albanian Society of Istanbul, and author of a tract that has become a historical watershed: *Shqipëria. Ç'ka qënë, ç'është e çdo të bëhetë* (Albania: What It Was, What It Is and What It Will Become) (Bucharest, 1899). Each country presents the author as its own, omitting or minimizing his activism in the “other camp.”⁸⁰

The Balkan countries are repositories of Ottoman archives. Their collections can hardly compare in terms of volume with those of Turkey (Başbakanlık, Topkapı), which were, for a long time, difficult to access by non-Turkish scholars and whose value is only just starting to emerge. Nevertheless, the archives of Sofia, Sarajevo or Heraklion contain significant Ottoman collections, often of great interest to local history. The publication and translation of some of the records (*sicil*) of the *kadi* of Bitola between 1950 and 1960 was a revelation for Balkan historians, who discovered that the history of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries could be approached in another manner. Unfortunately, these archives are open only to a limited number of specialists and remain quite daunting, even when translated. The meticulous groundwork that has been going on for over half a century on the archives is of interest to a limited circle of historians and has little impact on collective representations. Nevertheless, this is where we will undoubtedly find the key that will allow us to unlock the “Ottoman syndrome” of the Balkan peoples.

3.5 *Cuisine*

Very little is known about Balkan culinary practices in the pre-Ottoman period. Much more documentation is available in the nineteenth century, revealing a homogenous picture for the entire peninsula, for example with respect to dairy foods (yogurt, feta cheese). This homogenization is due largely to the fact that many foodstuffs were introduced to the Balkans during the Ottoman

McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821–1922* (Princeton: Darwin, 1995).

80 Bülent Bilmez, “Sami Frashëri or Şemseddin Sami? Mythologization of an Ottoman Intellectual in the Modern Turkish and Socialist Albanian Historiographies Based on a ‘Selective Perception,’” *Balkanologie* 7, no. 2 (2003): 19–46. To date, we have not seen Bulgarian nationalism claim the great historian Ahmet Cevdet Pasha (1822–1895) due to his Pomak origins.

era, either from the Middle East (rice, sesame seeds, eggplant) or from the Americas (corn, potatoes, tomatoes, capsicums); the buffalo is Asian, the turkey American.⁸¹

The rural masses' very modest standard of living was hardly conducive to culinary prowess, and it was only in urban settings that what could be termed a Balkan gastronomy emerged. It was part of a larger Middle Eastern continuum for which Istanbul was, for quite some time, the center of reference.⁸² Of course, local variations existed, between coastal areas and farming lands, but the products, preparation methods and even names were often identical. Rice, which occupied a central place in the diet of the Ottoman army, in contrast to the bread and biscuits fed to Western armies, retains a certain social prestige in the Balkans and is still served during festive meals in the countryside. Grilled meats (*kebab*) are also popular, most often using minced meat and prepared by skilled butchers; they are generally served during festivities or carnivals. Cheese, meat and spinach pies (*börek*, *banica*, *plăcintă*) are prepared in speciality shops, while "Turkish bagels" (*simi*t, *gevrek*) are sold by street vendors.

In terms of household cuisine, the same names are sometimes used for quite different preparations. Ask people in different Balkan countries to define *musaka* and you risk starting a war! The name *güveç* or *dolma* is given to dozens of different recipes. However, when it comes to pastries and sweets, the Ottoman legacy is faithfully followed; all of the Balkan countries continue to enjoy the same *baklavas*, *kadaif*s and *tulumbas*, *lokum* and *halva*.

The impetus to define a "national cuisine" is new to the Balkans, more the result of the demands of international tourism than of national requirements. Ordinary citizens do not concern themselves with the geographical origins of the food they eat (although they are well versed in the ethno-religious dietary restrictions of their neighboring communities). As there is no question of giving up their favorite dishes under the pretext that they are "Turkish" or "Ottoman," they are simply incorporated into national cuisine, sometimes after undergoing a name change.⁸³

81 Corn was rapidly introduced throughout the Eastern Mediterranean basin. (For a long time it was known as "Turkish wheat" in southern France.) The same was true of turkey. However, the potato was only introduced at a much later stage.

82 Hedda Reindl-Kiel, "Wesirfinger und Frauenschenkel. Zur Sozialgeschichte der türkischen Küche," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 77 (1995): 57–84; Stéphane Yérasimos and Belkis Taskeser, *A la table du Grand Turc* (Arles: Actes Sud—Sindbad, 2001).

83 Stefan Detchev, "Shopska salata: kak se razhda edin natsionalen kulinaran simvol," in *V tǎrsene na bălgarskoto. Mrezhi na natsionalna intimnost, XIX–XXI vek*, ed. Stefan Detchev (Sofia: Institut za izsledvane na izkustvata, 2010), 411–463.

3.6 *A Few Cultural Practices*

A certain Ottoman legacy can be discerned in the popularity of a number of sports. Wrestling was idolized in the Ottoman Empire, and Sultan Abdülaziz was said to be adept at it. Wrestling competitions (*güreş*) were organized as part of the most sumptuous festivities, such as the weddings of major personalities. In the Balkans, Ottoman wrestling (oil wrestling by oiled men in leather shorts) has been replaced by Olympic norms, and wrestlers who win medals for their country are among the athletes who enjoy significant media prestige.

Unbeknownst to them, the Balkans still use Ottoman measuring units. The ideal agricultural holding during the classical period of the Empire was the *çiftthane*, or small farm that could be worked by a peasant with a pair of oxen. It was only much later, in the eighteenth century, that latifundia (*çiftlik*s) began to develop in the Balkans. In this respect, Moldavia and Wallachia, countries with agricultural systems based on large estates, are not at all Ottoman. The small agricultural holding promoted by the Ottoman state was measured in *dönüm* (forty square paces). This unit of measurement is still used in rural Greece today, under the name of *stremma*. Elsewhere, although the metric system is used, the unit of reference remains the *decare* and not the hectare used in the rest of Europe. Similarly, the smallest monetary unit in theory continues to be designated in the languages of the region as *para*. This echoes the distant memory of the large unified market that spread from the Danube to the Euphrates.

A rather ambiguous Ottoman relic in the Balkans remains the practice of *kurban*. This is the ritual sacrifice of an animal whose meat is distributed and consumed collectively, as part of a vow, in gratitude for a cure or for the good of the community. While this practice is to be found in the Old Testament and in pagan antiquity, it was in all likelihood re-introduced under the influence of Islam. It is in flagrant contradiction to Christian precepts that replaced blood sacrifice with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ or the Eucharist. The Orthodox churches chose not to contradict the customs of their faithful, giving their blessing to this ritual of popular religion.⁸⁴

The rituals of hospitality remain greatly influenced by Ottoman tradition. This is understandable, given that the relevant gestures and spoken formulas were deliberately developed to ensure harmonious inter-community relations throughout the Empire. They were highly stereotyped and used by all as a form of gestural communication. They have largely survived to the present day. Guests take off their shoes (or not, if they want to be “modern”) at some

84 Biljana Sikimić and Petko Hristov, eds., *Kurban in the Balkans* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies of SASA, 2007).

point in the house that marks the boundary between indoors and outdoors (in Ottoman architecture, the boundary was signaled by a step, at the foot of which visitors left their shoes). Guests may only enter specific parts of the home—the reception room, which is not really a “living room” but corresponds to the former *selamlık*. While the ritual of a spoonful of jam and a glass of water largely disappeared in the late twentieth century, coffee remains an important welcoming ritual. In Serbia, it is often ground before the guest’s eyes in a traditional oblong copper mill. The very formula used to greet a guest—*zapov-jadajte! povelete! oriste!*—is a translation of the Turkish formula *buyrunuz!* (literally: “place your orders!” presupposing that the host is your servant). Welcoming important guests at the railway station or airport, or escorting them there, is also one of the honorific rituals inherited from the Ottoman era (where guests were welcomed by a procession some distance away from the town). Many stereotypical formulas of blessing, congratulations or encouragement continue to be expressed in Turkish (*maşallah, aşkolsun, hayırlı olsun, bereket versin*, etc.). The universal invitation in the Balkans, regardless of the country, remains *hadi! haide! hajde!* The entire gestural vocabulary that is used in the Balkans merits further research.

Music is another area of non-verbal communication that acts as a bridge between the peoples of the region. Not “classical” music, the music of the Ottoman court whose subtleties were for a long time the secret preserve of a refined elite. Nor music of the conservatory, which imitated that of the West. But music of the countryside, of village weddings and festivals. The same musical instruments were used in different provinces, the most iconic being the *kemane* (similar to the violin), the *zurna* (more strident than the clarinet) and the *da(v)ul* (a double-headed bass drum producing different sounds on each side). The same repertoire was played by the same Roma musicians during festivities in different communities. The popularity of so-called “Gypsy music” in the West in the past twenty years (films by E. Kusturica, the *Taraf de Haïdouks*, and elsewhere) has given a new legitimacy to this music, which is highly adaptable to the tastes of different audiences.

This list of cultural examples closely related to Ottoman practices could be extended indefinitely.⁸⁵ To provide a more in-depth analysis, ethnologists/anthropologists will need to better understand the lifestyles of the Balkans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or historians will need to leave their archives behind and start observing in the field. Interdisciplinarity is essential for a better understanding of phenomena that are becoming increasingly

85 An inventory of this *Hinterlassenschaft* can be found in H.G. Majer in his introduction to *Die Staaten Südosteuropas und die Osmanen*, 20.

difficult to decipher as the Ottoman past recedes further and further into the distance.

Today, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire is largely implicit. It is necessary to look for its vestiges in the most popular Balkan contexts. It is on the margins, in the most remote rural areas, among older refugees, among the Gypsies, or in the slang used by criminals that we are most likely to find Ottoman vestiges that are still alive today. Migrant workers in the West who came from the various Balkan countries or from Turkey are adept at using these vestiges in order to build up their own networks: they are brought together by the use of common references in their lexical base, in their ways of working, of mixing with each other, of eating. Quite dramatically, Greece has been the destination of a massive wave of Albanian migration over the past twenty years, one that has hardly been studied.⁸⁶ Apart from intermittent rejections, the integration of this foreign workforce into the Greek social fabric has occurred quite rapidly and without too much turbulence. This movement promises to be long-lived, or even permanent. The ability of Albanians to insert themselves into Greek society can largely be explained by the existence of an ancient foundation of Ottoman behavior on which two apparently divergent societies on either side of the border have continued to rely.

4 Conclusion

Ottoman rule in the Balkans began to wane two centuries ago, and the Ottoman Empire finally disappeared in 1923. Any shred of a living memory has been extinguished; only a constructed memory remains. The discourse that consisted of rejecting the Ottoman past was an inevitable phase in the emergence of Balkan national identities. It was accompanied by many excesses and patent untruths that are no longer tenable today. At the same time, in the last half-century, Ottoman scholarship has undergone a significant quantitative and qualitative leap. Faced with a wealth of knowledge that is increasingly rich, complex and subtle, the discourse of rejection continues to stick to its guns. It has no desire to abandon its convictions or its stubborn resentment. "Experts in facts" and "experts in feelings" produce historical discourses in parallel, in a silent rivalry that at times spills over in controversies. However, the balance of power between the two camps never really changes.

86 Pierre Sintès, *La raison du mouvement: territoires et réseaux de migrants albanais en Grèce* (Paris: Karthala, 2010).

Are these two opponents doomed to remain at loggerheads? I think not. History, as a discipline of the mind, serves to do more than produce a discourse of identity (and thus simultaneously a discourse of rejection). Historical narrative can also be inclusive. That is what current efforts are aimed at in developing a European historical narrative that is no longer exclusively focused on Western Europe. That is also what the new research in global history hopes to achieve. In the Balkans, national history, a narrow and egocentric history, has been practiced too often. The regional history of the Balkans is too often simply a juxtaposition of national histories; at best, it leads to a sort of *corpus separatum* within European history or Ottoman history. By taking a wider perspective, by broadening our field of vision, historical research tempers these antagonistic approaches. Considered on a larger scale, the Ottoman legacy ceases to be a problem. This is a call, therefore, to “think big.”

The Concept of National Revival in Balkan Historiographies

Alexander Vezenkov and Tchavdar Marinov

This article examines the usages of the notion of “revival” in the context of nineteenth-century Balkan history and, more precisely, in different national historiographies in the region. The first problem is the transformation of a popular metaphor into a historiographical concept that corresponds to a clearly defined period. In this regard the study benefits from the established tradition of conceptual history or *Begriffsgeschichte* without necessarily following it as a model. Our main focus is to examine the powerful role played by the concept of “revival” in history-writing and the way it shaped the historical narrative.¹

The idea of “revival” plays a different role in individual national historiographies in the Balkans. In some of them, “revival” not only is an omnipresent metaphor in historical writing but also represents a clearly defined period of national history. This is the case in Bulgarian and Albanian historiography, where the “national revival period” has a special place in general historical accounts, and many studies and monographs deal with it. In Macedonia the concept of “national revival” is also well-known, but it is not accepted by all scholars. In other cases the word “revival” is seldom used: it rarely appears in Greek, Serbian and Romanian history books and is absent from the Turkish one. The same notion often appears in the historiographies of some neighboring countries that usually are defined not as “Balkan” but as Central European.

In Bulgarian historiography the “Bulgarian Revival” (*Bălgarsko/to/ vāzrazhdane*), or simply the “Revival” (*Vāzrazhdane/to*), is one of the major eras in Bulgarian history, covering the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries until the creation of the autonomous Bulgarian principality after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878.² The *Vāzrazhdane* is considered a period of rapid

1 This article is based on two previous publications, namely the articles “Ochevidno samo na prāv pogled: Bălgarskoto vāzrazhdane kato otdelna epoha” (by Alexander Vezenkov) and “Shto e toa makedonska prerodba?” Kām makedonskata istoriografska kontseptziya za natsionalno vāzrazhdane” (by Tchavdar Marinov) in *Balkanskiyat XIX vek. Drugi prochiti*, ed. Diana Mishkova (Sofia: CAS-Sofia / Riva, 2006), 82–158.

2 Hristo Gandev, *Problemi na Bălgarsko vāzrazhdane* (Sofia: BAN, 1976); *Istoriya na Bălgariya*, vol. 5, *Bălgarsko vāzrazhdane XVIII—sredata na XIX vek*, ed. Nikolay Todorov (Sofia: BAN, 1985); *Istoriya na Bălgariya*, vol. 6, *Bălgarsko vāzrazhdane 1856–1878 g.*, ed. Krumka Sharova

transformation in all domains of the Bulgarians' economic, social, cultural and political life during the last period of nearly two centuries under Ottoman rule. Historical studies pay attention mostly to the growing national consciousness; the increasing economic activity of the Bulgarians; the development of different forms of autonomous political organizations at the local level; the creation of Bulgarian schools, press and literature; the struggle for the creation of a Bulgarian Church independent from the Patriarchate of Constantinople. One very important part is the movement for political independence. Still, opinions differ on when the Revival began; different versions range between circa 1600 and the 1820s. There are even discussions about the end of the Revival. In the past some scholars believed the Revival ended successfully with the recognition of an independent Bulgarian Church in 1870 (or even its proclamation in 1860). Yet other publications insist that the Revival continued in territories that were not included in the Bulgarian state after 1878.³ Despite the uncertainties about its timing, Bulgarian historians seem to agree that the Revival was a new and distinct historical era that covered at least the last century under Ottoman rule. This view is reproduced in schoolbooks, and as a result, all relatively educated people in Bulgaria have at least a general impression of the Revival as one of the greatest eras of their national history. Many foreign scholars also accept the concept of Revival as a distinct era, especially when they try to propose a general overview of Bulgarian history.⁴

Albanian historiography describes a major era of the national history very similar to the Bulgarian *Vǎzrazhdane*, using a somewhat more precise term: "national Revival" (*Rilindja kombëtare*). In the *History of Albania*, published by the Academy of Sciences in Tirana, as well as in other publications in the country and abroad, the *Rilindja* is presented as a period clearly distinct from the other centuries of Albanian history "under Ottoman rule."⁵ Many foreign

(Sofia: BAN, 1988); Nikolay Genchev, *Bǎlgarsko vǎzrazhdane* (Sofia: OF, 1988; 1st ed., 1978); Plamen Mitev, *Bǎlgarskoto vǎzrazhdane. Lektsionen kurs* (Sofia: Lik, 1999; 2nd ed., Sofia: Standard, 2012).

3 Roumen Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans: Historiography of the Bulgarian Revival* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 99 ff., first published in Bulgarian as *Kak se misli Bǎlgarskoto vǎzrazhdane* (Sofia: LIK, 2002).

4 Richard Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 46 ff.

5 The first edition of the book, in its part dealing with the *Rilindja*, dates from 1965: *Historia e Shqipërisë*, vol. 2 (Tirana: Universiteti Shtetëtor i Tiranës, 1965), 39–365. The text was reprinted in 1972 and 1984, and a revised edition appeared in 2002: *Historia e popullit shqiptar*, vol. 2, *Rilindja Kombëtare. Vitet 30 të shek. XIX–1912* (Tirana: Toena, 2002) and online as

scholars also use the concept of *Rilindja*,⁶ although some, like Nathalie Clayer, do not use and even avoid this term.⁷ It should be mentioned that there are different opinions about when the *Rilindja* began. The publications of the Academy of Sciences in Tirana put it earlier, in the 1830s and 1840s, while many historians who work abroad, as well as those from younger generations, date it only from 1878 onwards.

Of course, the narrative differs from the Bulgarian one, not only because the *Rilindja* developed and culminated several decades later, but also because of some major differences between the two peoples, especially the fact that the majority of Albanians are Muslim. Obviously, in the Albanian case there is no “struggle for an independent Church,” and the question about the life of the different religious communities is generally downplayed. Albanian historiography underlines that the ethnic and national identity of the Albanians did not depend on their religious affiliation. However, both Bulgarian and Albanian historiography insist that the national affiliation was more important than the religious one, and they criticize the alleged denationalizing goals of the *millet* system. The ambition in the Bulgarian case was to produce a convincing narrative about the successful emancipation vis-à-vis the “Greeks” in the Orthodox *millet*, as until very late many “Bulgarians” considered themselves simply Christians (i.e., Orthodox Christians). In the Albanian case the problem is even greater, because not only were there no “Albanians” in official categories, but they were considered part of several different religious communities, simply as Muslim, Orthodox or Catholic. In both cases national historiographies tried to undermine something very important for the Ottoman state and society as a whole—the primary identification with religion.

In Albanian historiography much more attention is paid to the language question and the elaboration of an Albanian alphabet, which also corresponds to the desire to downplay and even to erase religious and regional differences and to promote national unification through language standardization.

Historia e Shqipërisë at <http://historia.shqiperia.com/>, accessed on September 29, 2013. See also Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Puto, *The History of Albania from Its Origin to the Present Day* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 107–145. For an overview of publications in communist Albania until 1978: Gazmend Shpuza, *Bibliografi për Rilindjen kombëtare Shqiptare, 1945–1978 (Shkrime të botuara në RPSSH)* (Tirana: ASHPRSSH, 1988). As an alternative, the most widely used work is Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878–1912* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967).

6 E.g., Nina Smirnova, *Istoriya Albanii v XX veku* (Moscow: Nauka, 2003), 25 ff.; Serges Metais, *Histoire des Albanais* (Paris: Fayard, 2006).

7 Nathalie Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais. La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe* (Paris: Karthala, 2007).

Otherwise, in both cases schools and education are seen as an important part of the national movement.

The idea of “self-governance” is presented in a different way. In the Bulgarian case, what is known as the ecclesiastical community (*Bălgarska [tsărkovna] obshtina*) is at the center of the debate, while in Albanian historiography there is no such topic. Albanian historiography pays more attention to local notables, especially during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: the semi-independent pashaluks of the Bushatlis in the north (Shkodra) and Ali Tepedelenli in the south (Janina). Still, we should keep in mind what the two historiographies have in common: they both see and present the last century or so under Ottoman rule as a “national revival,” a distinct major era in their history that culminates with the national independence. This similarity is even clearer when compared with the Greek and Serbian case.

Greek historiography describes some processes that are considered part of the Revival in Bulgarian and Albanian history—the increasing economic activity of the Greek subjects (especially commerce) and the political and intellectual movement that would lead to the Greek revolution and independence. In the past some publications actually alleged that there was a Greek “renaissance” or “Risorgimento” after 1715⁸ or 1740.⁹ Expressions like “the renaissance of the Greeks” and “the cultural renaissance of Greece” could be found in some works of popular history.¹⁰ At present, despite the occasional use of terms such as “renaissance” (*anagennisi*) and “national” or “spiritual awakening” (*ethniki* or *pnevmatiki afypnisi*), there is no distinct period called “Revival” between the *tourkokratia* proper and the 1821 uprising. More generally, the last century under Ottoman rule does not have symbolic value as it does in the Bulgarian and the Albanian cases, and thus it is presented relatively briefly.¹¹ However, there is a

8 Amvrosios Frantzis, *Epitomi tis Istorias tis Anagennitiseis Ellados* (Athens, 1839); Nikolas Svoronos, *Histoire de la Grèce moderne* (Paris: PUF, 1953), 31.

9 François Pouqueville, *Histoire de la régénération de la Grèce, comprenant le précis des événements depuis 1740 jusqu'en 1824*, vols. 1–2 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1824); Marco Pieri, *Storia del Risorgimento della Grecia dal 1740 al 1824* (Milan: Romeo Marazzani, 1858).

10 Sophocles M. Sophocles, *A History of Greece* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1961), 164, 212.

11 For instance, in schoolbooks (e.g., Vasilis B. Sfiroeras, *Istoria neoteri kai syghroni. III Gimnasiou*, 9th ed. (Athens: Organismos ekdoseos didaktikon vivlion, 1999), 99–142, 150–203), encyclopedias (e.g., *Megali Elliniki Enkyklopaideia*, vol. 10 [Athens: Pirsos, 1934], 560–575); popular works: Yannis Kordatos, *Megali istoria tis Elladas*, vols. 9, 10 (Athens: Ekdoseis 200s aionas, 1956); *Istoria tou Ellinikou ethnous*, vols. 10, 11 (Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon, 1975). The same is true in the “short” histories of Greece by A. Vakalopoulos, P. Tzermias, J.S. Koliopoulos, and others.

problem that deserves to be analyzed, and that is what is called the (Modern) Greek Enlightenment, which is considered by some authors (but only some) as an equivalent of the national revivals among other Balkan nations.

The situation in Serbian historiography seems similar to the Greek case. Historical studies occasionally mention the term “[national] revival” (*preporod*); one can also find comments that the eighteenth century was a “great century in the modern history of the Serbs” or that the “revolution” (sic) of 1804 was a result of the “general spiritual, social and political development of the Serbs during the eighteenth century.”¹² These phrases recall the Bulgarian and Albanian historical narrative about the (national) Revival, but they remain isolated. The Serbian uprising of 1804 is not presented as the culmination of a decades-long national movement, and just like in the Greek case, there is no “grand narrative” about the last century or so under Ottoman rule. There are no monographs about the “Serbian *preporod*” or such chapters in general surveys of Serbian history under Ottoman rule.¹³

The Macedonian case is somewhat more specific because of the numerous shifts in the historiographical paradigm. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, some publications spoke of a Macedonian “[National] Renaissance” very similar to the Bulgarian version; later this notion persisted in popular writings and almost disappeared from academic research. Nowadays the term is used in a completely different manner from Bulgarian and Albanian historiography, and the question needs to be examined separately.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, we also need to mention the Romanian case concerning the history of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, respectively the so-called Old Kingdom. Academic historiography traditionally presents the 1821 uprising led by Alexander Ypsilanti and Tudor Vladimirescu as the dividing line between medieval (sic) and modern Romanian history.¹⁴ Unlike most of the region, the two principalities remained semi-independent during the whole Ottoman period, and in fact the year 1821 does not constitute a dramatic break. Obviously in this context a revival comparable to the Bulgarian and the Albanian one is not conceivable. Still, some Romanian historians speak of a “national awakening” (*redeșteptarea națională*) in describing the birth of modern nationalism at the end of the eighteenth and beginning

12 Radovan Samardžić, *Ideje za srpsku istoriju* (Belgrade: Jugoslavijapublik, 1989) 19, 237, 239.

13 Vladimir Ćorović, *Istorija Srba*, vol. 2 (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1989), 257–263; Olga Zirojević, *Srbija pod turskom vlašću (1459–1804)* (Belgrade: DaMad, 1995; 2nd ed., 2007).

14 In fact the uprising only led to the end of the “Phanariots’ regime” in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, though some Phanariots were appointed in the Principalities during the following decades as well.

of the nineteenth century, without seeing it as a distinct period.¹⁵ Otherwise, several scholars use the term “national revival” to define the period between the “Organic Regulations” (1830–1831) and World War I. In one of his articles, Dan Berindei called the time after 1831 the “beginning of the period of national renaissance” (*inaugurarea perioadei de renaștere națională*).¹⁶ In a similar way, Vlad Georgescu, in his general overview of Romanian history, includes a chapter called “The Time of the Renaissance/Rebirth” (*Vremea Renașterii*), which covers the period 1831–1918.¹⁷ This is the history of the new independent state and has nothing to do with the revivals we are talking about, despite the fact that chronologically it coincides, for example, with the *Rilindja*. It should be underlined that, despite the fact that the term “revival” appears in some cases, most publications using the term *renașterea* deal with the Revival among Albanian and Bulgarian immigrant communities in Romania.

Taking a broader view, one notes that most publications on general Balkan history do not present an era of the “Balkan revival.” This is the case for older publications like those of Nicolae Iorga, as well as in reference works published during the second half of the twentieth century, including those by Georg Stadtmüller, Barbara Jelavich, Stevan Pavlowitch and Mark Mazower. Occasionally the “Balkan revival” is mentioned in historical studies referring not only to the “*réveil culturel et national des Slaves de Macédoine*,” but also to the “*réveil national*” of the Greek community and even to the “*renaissance nationale de l'identité juive*.”¹⁸ Barbara Jelavich presents the “cultural revival” as a phase that precedes the national movement. She mentions the “Balkan national revivals” (including the “Greek national revival”) and even refers at a certain point to “the period of national revival,”¹⁹ but the narrative as a whole does not follow these concepts. In a similar way, Georg Stadtmüller mentions

15 Cf. Bogdan Popovici in *Istoria României în texte*, ed. Bogdan Murgescu (Bucharest: Corint, 2001), 178–183.

16 Dan Berindei, *Românii și Europa în perioadele premodernă și modernă* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997), 286.

17 Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria românilor de la origini pînă în zilele noastre* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992), 133–202. One monograph with a title similar to “The Time of the Renaissance/Rebirth” actually examines the role of the “capitulations” in defending the Romanian interests: Anton Caragea, *Epoca Renașterii Naționale (1750–1878)* (Bucharest: Editura Universității București, 2003).

18 *Salonique, 1850–1918: la “ville des Juifs” et le réveil des Balkans*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Autrement, 1993), 77, 125, 130.

19 Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), x, and vol. 2, 85, 135.

the national revival in the Bulgarian and Greek case without presenting it or elaborating on the term.²⁰ Some authors like Leften Stavrianos and Georges Castellan briefly present the Bulgarian and the Albanian Revival but do not use the term for the Balkans in general.²¹ Even the few like Edgar Hösch who present the “Balkan Revival” as a topic on its own actually discuss almost exclusively the Bulgarian and the Albanian case.²² The short section on “The National Revival as a Cultural Era” in his *History of the Balkan Countries* starts with the remark that as a name of an era, the term “national revival” is only of limited use (“*nur von beschränkter Brauchbarkeit*”) for the history of Balkan peoples.²³

It is obvious that in this regard Balkan studies simply reflected and tried to combine the approaches of different national historiographies in the region. As a result, the term “revival” was adopted, and some historians reproduced the interpretations of the respective national historiographies about the Bulgarian and Albanian Revival, but no one ever managed to construct a narrative about the “Balkan revival.”

When there were such attempts, they reflected the preoccupations of specific national historiographies. The paradigm of the Revival is so deeply rooted in Bulgarian historiography that Bulgarian historians writing about Balkan history tend to speak of the “Balkan revival” as an important period in the region’s history. General works on Balkan history written by Bulgarian authors follow the paradigm of national historiography; in the history of the peninsula, they distinguish the “Ottoman period,” ranging from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century (sometimes euphemistically called the “Late Middle Ages”) from the “era of the Balkan Revival.” For instance, in the overview *History of Balkan Peoples* by Strashimir Dimitrov and Krăstyo Manchev, the first volume is subdivided into two parts: “Late Middle Ages” (here meaning the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries) and the much longer “Balkan Revival and Establishment of Bourgeois [sic] Balkan States” (mid-eighteenth century to 1878).²⁴ In this case the “Balkan Revival” simply coincides with the Bulgarian *Văzrazhdane*. In

20 Georg Stadtmüller, *Geschichte Südosteuropas*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1976), 365, 374, 382 (1st ed., 1950).

21 Leften S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1958), 364–380, 496–512; Georges Castellan, *Histoire des Balkans, XIV^e–XX^e siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1991).

22 Edgar Hösch, *Geschichte der Balkanländer. Von Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, 2nd ed. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993), 152–153 and 156–159.

23 Ibid., 159.

24 Strashimir Dimitrov and Krăstyo Mantchev, *Istoriya na balkanskite narodi. T. 1 (XV–XIX vek)*, 2nd ed. (Sofia: Paradigma, 1999) (1st ed., 1971).

a collection of primary documents on fifteenth-to-nineteenth-century Balkan history, Maria Todorova put in Part 2 those relevant to the “revival of Balkan peoples.” Here again, the Revival is considered one of the “phenomena that characterize the history of the whole Balkan peninsula.”²⁵

The same scheme is used in teaching Balkan history at the university level. In the Faculty of History of Sofia University, Part 2 of the course “Modern Balkan History” is called “The Revival of the Balkan Peoples and Struggles for National Liberation,” while Part 13 is “Essential Characteristics of the Balkan Revival,” which also includes the topic “General traits and specificities of the Revival processes among individual Balkan peoples.”²⁶ These questions correspond to the paradigm established in Bulgarian historiography but simply ignore the approach of most other historiographies in the region. Likewise, the aforementioned second volume of the “academic” *History of Albania* starts by presenting the Revival as a new era for the Balkans as a whole: “The nineteenth century marks a new era for the Albanian people, as well as for the other Balkan peoples—the era of the Revival.”²⁷ On the contrary, as we have seen from some of the already quoted examples, general overviews of Balkan history written by Greek, Romanian or Serbian historians usually do not even discuss the existence of such a period.

The difference between the two approaches could also be seen at the regional level. In the case of Dobrudja, Bulgarian historiography presents a clearly delimited Revival period that coincides precisely with the *Văzrazhdane* at the national level.²⁸ The Romanian version also subdivides the history of Dobrudja under Ottoman domination into two parts but follows the periodization of the history of the Romanian principalities. According to the history of Dobrudja published in 1979 by Adrian Rădulescu and Ion Bitoleanu, the modern period of Dobrudja’s history starts in 1821, although the uprising in that year had no impact on the history of the region, which was then part of the Eyalet of Silistre.²⁹ The new edition that appeared almost two decades later is revised in several regards; again the Ottoman domination of Dobrudja is

25 Maria Todorova, *Podbrani izvori za istoriyata na balkanskite narodi (xv–xix v.)* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2008) (1st ed. 1977).

26 http://www.clio.uni-sofia.bg/BG/pass/Nova_balkanska_pasport.pdf, accessed on September 29, 2013.

27 See also Stefanaq Pollo, *Në gjurmë të historisë shqiptare*, vol. 1, *Rilindja kombëtare* (Tirana: ASHRPSSH, 1990), 8, 11.

28 Velko Tonev, *Dobrudzha prez Văzrazhdaneto* (Varna: Varna, 1973); Strashimir Dimitrov, Nikolay Zhetchev and Velko Tonev, *Istoriya na Dobrudzha*, vol. 3 (Sofia: BAN, 1988), 113 ff.

29 Adrian Rădulescu and Ion Bitoleanu, *Istoria Românilor dintre Dunare și Mare. Dobrogea* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1979), 236.

subdivided into two parts, but 1821 is not a clear cutoff date. It is more surprising that the second period under Ottoman rule (Chapter 13) is titled “The Last Decades of the Ottoman Administration. Romanian Revival.” The Romanian Revival (*renașterea românească*) is regarded as a movement “that served the national cause.”³⁰ It is easy to discover the roots of this concept: only two publications in the bibliography of this chapter contain the word “Revival,” and both are written by Bulgarian authors—Stiliyan Chilingirov and Velko Tonev.³¹

The national revivals of the Balkan nations are often presented as an equivalent of one or several processes in the rest of Europe: the Renaissance, in some cases the Reformation, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, or more generally the modernization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³² Still, one parallel seems more important than the others—the very names *Văzrazhdane* and *Rilindja* literally mean “Renaissance.” That led many to see them as an equivalent of the Renaissance in Europe and even to make comparisons with the Italian Renaissance. In the past these views were popularized by leading scholars like Ivan Shishmanov, who not only discovered close parallels between the two processes but even mixed them terminologically, talking of the “Italian *văzrazhdane*” and at some point of “our renaissance” (*nashiyat renesans*).³³ Accordingly, the term *Văzrazhdane* used to be translated as “Renaissance” (especially in French), and Albanian publications in foreign languages also used to translate *Rilindja* as “Renaissance.”³⁴ At present, this line of interpretation has largely been abandoned in scholarly research, although it persists in popular interpretations and more traditionally oriented publications. Gradually another basis for comparison gained popularity among scholars—revivals and awakenings in Central and Eastern Europe, in other multinational empires: in the Czech lands and Slovakia, in the Baltic and so on. As a result, in recent publications *Văzrazhdane* and *Rilindja* are increasingly translated as “revival/*réveil*.” This is a parallel that certainly deserves more attention. In fact,

30 Adrian Rădulescu and Ion Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrugei* (Constanța: Ex Ponto, 1998), 327.

31 Ibid., 492–495.

32 In detail: Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans*, 24 ff.

33 Ivan Shishmanov, *Ot Paisiya do Rakovski. Statii po bălgarskoto vâzrazhdane*, ed. Mihail Arnaudov (Sofia: MNP, 1943), 59, 63. See also Ivan Dujčev, “Renesansovi povei v Bălgariya prez srednovekovieto i novo vreme,” in *Păteki ot utroto* (Sofia: Otechestvo, 1985), 142–160.

34 Shpuza, *Bibliografi për Rilinden*, vii–viii; Zija Shkodra, *Qyteti shqiptar gjatë Rilindjes kombëtare* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, 1984), 471–484, abridged French edition: *La ville albanaise au cours de la Renaissance nationale, 1830–1912* (Tirana: Académie des sciences de la RPS d’Albanie, Institut d’histoire, 1988); Kristo Frashëri, *Histoire de l’Albanie* (Tirana, 1964), 128–129; Nikolaj Genčev, *La Renaissance bulgare* (Sofia: Sofia Presse, 1977), etc.

in some general overviews, the revival among Croats and Slovenes is seen as part of Balkan history.

It seems more appropriate to start with an analysis of the dominant historiographical discourse about the clear cases of “national revival” in the Ottoman Empire—that is, the concept of national revival in Bulgarian and Albanian historiography. Because of our very limited knowledge of the historiographies that deal with the rest of the Ottoman space, the present study concentrates only on the Balkan provinces, although Armenian history and the *nahda* among Arabs present some tempting parallels. Later, we will compare the *Vǎzrazhdane* and the *Rilindja* with the “national revivals” elsewhere in Europe, as well as with the concept of “the Enlightenment” in Balkan historiographies.

The *Vǎzrazhdane* and the *Rilindja* in History-Writing

The perception of the (national) Revival as a distinct and very important era has a great impact on the way the last century of Ottoman rule is represented in Bulgarian and Albanian historiography. First of all, the fact that there is a grand narrative is clearly visible in quantitative terms. In the Bulgarian case the *Vǎzrazhdane* receives a long and detailed treatment in all general histories of Bulgaria, schoolbooks and so on. In all kinds of general histories, the section on the Revival is significantly longer than the one on the “fifteenth through seventeenth centuries.” In this way the Revival not only covers the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries completely but also actually dominates the narrative about the Ottoman period as a whole. There is an immense bibliography, and a number of monographs present the *Vǎzrazhdane*.

The same phenomenon exists in Albanian historiography, and this is visible in publications from at least the 1960s onwards. Just as in the Bulgarian case, the national Revival is examined as a period clearly distinct from the other centuries of Albanian history “under Ottoman rule.” In the 2002 edition of the *History of the Albanian People*, published by the Academy of Sciences, the *Rilindja* (1830s–1912) is the subject of a separate volume (the second one), while the Ottoman period is presented much more briefly in the first volume, together with the prehistoric, ancient and medieval history of Albania.

It is revealing to compare the Bulgarian and the Albanian concept of national revival to the few Greek and Serbian history books that use the metaphors of “renaissance” and “rebirth.” In the latter cases there is a detailed presentation of the national “revolution” and only a brief overview of previous developments.³⁵

35 Stojan Novaković, *Vaskrs države srpske: političko-istorijska studija o prvom srpskom ustanku 1804–1813*, 2nd ed. (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1904); published in

The “rebirth” is the act of the uprising and the creation of the new national state, and not so much the period that preceded it. One may ask whether the transformation of the revival period into a national myth in the Bulgarian and Albanian cases simply compensates for the lack of successful uprisings similar to those in the Serbian and Greek cases. Actually, this is related to an important transformation in the meaning of the term “revival”—in historiography it is no longer seen as a single act of “rebirth” (as was often the case in the nineteenth-century texts) but only as a long process.

There is one more reason why the creations of the national state in the Bulgarian and the Albanian cases could not play the role they had in Greek and Serbian historiography. In the latter cases the liberation of part of the national territory was seen as a beginning, as a partial success that could be completed later on. In the Bulgarian and Albanian case the “Liberation” was simultaneously experienced as a dismemberment (*razpokăsvane, copëtim*) of the “national lands.” In the Bulgarian case there were later attempts to acquire additional territories from the Ottoman Empire, which failed during the Balkan Wars and World War I. The failure of the irredentist project fueled speculation about the national unity that existed during the Revival but was lost due to a premature liberation.

The feeling in the Albanian case is particularly painful, because in 1913 most of the disputed territories with mixed populations were administered by Greece, Serbia and Montenegro. Thus national independence came at almost the same time as the loss of a large part of what constituted the “Albanian lands.” In this regard, what was called the “four Albanian *vilayets*,” that is, provinces predominantly inhabited by Albanians, had an undeniable advantage over the new independent state, while the short-term unification under Italian occupation during World War II could not play such a role. Three of the four provincial capitals of these *vilayets* were located outside present-day Albania: Janina/Ioannina (now in Greece) and Manastir/Bitola and Uskup/Skopje (now in Macedonia). Thus the administrative map of the Ottoman Empire (and, as a consequence, the *Rilindja*) offered more to the nationalist imagination than anything that happened after independence. Actually, there were numerous changes in the administrative organization of the provinces, and those changes also provided an opportunity to choose the most advantageous of several configurations.

Despite the ambition to write the history of a decades-long movement, the historiography actually concentrates on a few major events and key periods of the national movement. This is clearly visible in the Albanian case—by far the

German as *Die Wiedergeburt des serbischen Staates (1804–1813)* (Sarajevo: B.-H. Instituts für Balkanforschung, 1912).

largest number of monographs and articles deal with the League of Prizren (1878–1881) and the national movement in the years just before independence (1908–1912). In general, in accounts on the *Rilindja* these two periods are clearly over-represented, and other key events—usually uprisings—are also described in more detail. In both historiographies special attention is also paid to the biographies of the major figures of the revival and their deeds.

The ambition was to create a historical narrative that covers the whole era. As a result, in many cases different processes, events and individuals are artificially presented as belonging to one single movement. The description of the “armed struggle” during the early years of the *Vǎzrazhdane/Rilindja* is symptomatic of this: in both cases uprisings that occurred at different times and places and for very different reasons are listed chronologically, and history books create the impression that they were all part of one single movement for national independence.³⁶ Since the history of the Revival is largely a collection of biographies of major figures, they are likewise presented as related to one another as “predecessors” and “followers” serving the same cause. This is somewhat more problematic in the Bulgarian case, due to the ambition to present the Revival as an almost-two-centuries-long movement.

Concerning the territorial scope, it is often insisted, and many studies try to demonstrate, that the “revival processes” developed in “all Bulgarian lands.”³⁷ This applies equally to cultural life and political struggles. In addition, the communist historiography presented the economic processes in the nineteenth century as “the formation of a single national market,” a statement that could also be found in some later publications. Albanian historiography also insists that the national movement was well represented in “all Albanian lands,” which meant in all provinces (“the four Albanian *vilayets*,” Northern and Southern Albania, etc.), as well as in all communities (Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics; Tosks and Gëgs). In both cases, most important here were territories that were lost, primarily Macedonia in the Bulgarian case and Kosovo in the Albanian one.

Finally, the different “revival processes” are seen as interconnected. Some leading historians in Bulgaria recently insisted that one should not “divide” and “set against each other” the different manifestations of the Revival (education in Bulgarian schools, the struggle for an independent church, and the

36 Genchev, *Bǎlgarsko vǎzrazhdane*, 210–227; Aleks Buda, *Shkrime historike*, vol. 2 (Tirana: ASHRPSSH, 1986), 5–22 (co-author Petrika Thëngilli).

37 Ilia Todev, “Edinstvoto na bǎlgarskite vǎzrozhdenski protsesi v Miziya, Trakiya i Makedoniya,” in *Natsionalnoosvoboditelno dvizhenie na makedonskite i trakiyskite bǎlgari, 1878–1944*, vol. 1 (Sofia: MNI, 1994), 13–36.

armed struggle for political independence).³⁸ They also tried to downplay the tensions between different individuals and groups (different generations, “moderates” and “revolutionaries,” etc.) The Revival turned into a single process, indivisible in time and space.

An important element in building the grand narrative about the *Vǎzrazhdane* is the over-representation of the “revival processes” (*vǎzrozhdenski protsesi*). The same is true of the detailed presentation of major events and the biography of the main figures of the national movement (*vǎzrozhdentsi*, respectively *rilindas*). Yet the actual extent of the processes that are considered essential elements of the Revival is very limited. So, for example, after a little more than half a century of “Bulgarian” national education, a process considered one of the “mass and legal manifestations” of the *Vǎzrazhdane*, the first census in the Principality of Bulgaria (January 1, 1881) showed that only 3.3 percent of the population (5.0 percent of men and 1.5 percent of women) were able to read and write. This is an extremely low proportion, no higher than what one could expect to find in a pre-modern society. A similar discrepancy is to be found in the description of the struggles for political independence. Existing publications leave the impression that gradually, the entire nation became involved in the struggle for liberation. However, only several thousand people took up arms in the culmination of this struggle—the Uprising of April/May 1876.

Correspondingly, different political, social and economic transformations are presented as part of the Revival. In fact, this perception of the *Vǎzrazhdane* as an all-embracing phenomenon is the result of a long process that ended only after World War II. Initially, the increasing economic activity of the Bulgarians was regarded as a precondition for the Revival, but communist historiography started to present the economic recovery as an essential part of the Revival itself. Still, most studies on the *Vǎzrazhdane* ignore or downplay the fact that during the nineteenth century, there was economic growth in the Ottoman Empire as a whole. In the same way different manifestations of modernization are also seen as something typical of the Revival.

At same time, the national historiography simply ignores all reforms and transformations that could not be integrated into the narrative about the Revival. In historical writing about the *Vǎzrazhdane*, there is usually a brief

38 Krumka Sharova, “Vzaimodeystvie na dvizheniyata za natsionalna tsǎrkva, kultura i politicheskoto osvobozhdenie prez Vǎzrazhdaneto,” in *Kultura, tsǎrkva i revolyutsiya*, 11–39. Sharova even called the “unity” of these three processes a “Trinity” (p. 13). For a critical analysis, see Albena Hranova, *Istoriografiya i literatura. Za sotsialnoto konstruirane na istoricheskite ponyatiya i Golemi razkazi v bǎlgarskata kultura XIX–XX vek*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Prosveta, 2011), 129–134.

description of the “attempts” to reform the Empire, but it plays no role in the explanatory scheme. Some publications describe the reform efforts in more detail,³⁹ while others do not mention them at all,⁴⁰ but that has no impact on the narrative as a whole. The fact that many of these reforms (centralization, improved communications, etc.) changed the lives of all subjects is not discussed. Some attention is paid to the administrative reforms of Midhat Paşa in the Danube *Vilayet*, but without considering them in the context of a common Empire-wide trend. Actually, this interest in the reforms in the Danube *Vilayet* is related to the attempts to present the “Bulgarian provinces” as more advanced than the rest of the Empire.

Albanian historiography also presents Ottoman reforms very briefly, but the emphasis is different. While Bulgarian historians mainly discuss the unfulfilled promises for equality between Muslims and non-Muslims, Albanian authors pay more attention to the centralization, reforms in taxation and army recruitment, because they reduced the traditionally larger autonomy of the Albanians. As a result, much more attention is given to the revolts against the reforms—a topic that reappears on several occasions. While centralization is often overinterpreted as a deliberate policy of denationalization, all reactions against the reforms are glorified as a form of national resistance. Compared to Bulgarian historiography, there is better knowledge of the reforms, as well as more familiarity with the achievements of Ottoman studies and other Balkan historiographies. Nevertheless, that has a limited impact on the self-sufficient concept of national Revival.

Overall, the perception of the Revival as a distinct era has a crucial impact on the way historians understand and explain various nineteenth-century phenomena. In the Bulgarian case, many of these phenomena are labeled with the adjective *vāzrozhdenski* (“of the Revival”). It is used to identify not only political figures and ideas, newspapers and schools (*vāzrozhdentsi*, *vāzrozhdenski uchilishta*, *vāzrozhdenski vestnitsi*, etc.) but also economic activities, social life and architecture (*vāzrozhdenski zanayati*, *vāzrozhdenska kāshta*, *vāzrozhdenski grad*). In some cases, the use of the adjective *vāzrozhdenski* might be considered a neutral way to give a clearer idea of time, but usually it is misleading, suggesting a nonexistent connection.

To sum up, instead of presenting the process of the (national) Revival in the context of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, researchers went so far as to explain everything that happened at that time through the prism and in the

39 E.g., *Istoriya na Bālgariya*, vol. 5 (1985), 227 ff.; vol. 6 (1987), 32 ff.

40 E.g., Konstantin Kosev, *Kratka istoriya na Bālgarskoto vāzrazhdane* (Sofia: AI Marin Drinov, 2001).

context of a Bulgarian/Albanian Revival. Instead of saying that the “(national) Revival” took place during the nineteenth century, national historiography ended up saying that everything at that time happened “during the (national) Revival” (“*prez Vǎzrazhdaneto*” resp. “*gjatë Rilindjes kombëtare*”).

It should be emphasized that the perception of the *Vǎzrazhdane* as a clearly distinct era is a historiographical construct. Even if some truly did feel they were entering a “new era” in the nineteenth century and the term *Vǎzrazhdane* itself was used on many occasions, the very presentation of the *Vǎzrazhdane* as an era with clearly defined time limits is a much later invention. In the decades after 1878, people used to speak and write simply about the time “before the Liberation” (*predi Osvobozhdenieto*) or “under Turkish rule” (*pod tursko*). It is not surprising that the famous novel of Ivan Vazov (otherwise considered the author of fundamental myths about the Revival) is called “Under the Yoke” and not “During the *Vǎzrazhdane*.” The concept of the Revival as a distinct historical era took its definitive shape in the writings of historians who were not its contemporaries.

Now that it has been established in Bulgarian historiography, the perception of the Revival as a distinct era has not been seriously challenged for a long time. Even communist historiography, which revised the historical narrative in many respects, kept studying and presenting the Revival as one of the major eras in the national history. This is symptomatic because from a “Marxist” point of view, such a distinct era simply should not have existed. If one compares the periodization of Bulgarian history with the Marxist scheme of “socioeconomic formations,” it would become clear how problematic it was to find a place for the era of the Revival. All other major periods recognized by traditional historiography found a place more easily in the paradigm of “historical materialism.” The “slave society” corresponded to ancient times and the Thracian past, before the creation of the Bulgarian medieval state; the history of medieval Bulgaria and the Ottoman period were part of “feudalism”; and the new Bulgarian state during the years 1878–1944 was undoubtedly “capitalist” and became “socialist” after the communist takeover. That led to heated debates on whether the “Revival era” should be considered the end of “feudalism” or the beginning of “capitalism.” On the one hand, the Revival developed under Ottoman rule; on the other hand, it was seen as something fundamentally different from the previous centuries. Finally, the *Vǎzrazhdane* was labeled as a transitional period between “feudalism” and “capitalism.”⁴¹

41 Dimitrov and Manchev, *Istoriya na balkanskite narodi*, 123 ff.; Pollo, *Në gjurmë të historisë shqiptare*, 133; cf. Daskalov, *Kak se misli*, 102–109.

While adopting the main elements of the existing narrative, communist historiography had an important impact in at least two ways. First, it expanded history-writing on the Revival in the field of economic and social history, which means that everything that happened at that time could in fact be regarded as part of the *Vǎzrazhdane*. The second, unexpected, result was that the very attempt to create a “Marxist” narrative added incredible charm to the rediscovery of certain older “national” interpretations. Innovative studies after the 1960s in fact re-evaluated theses and publications of the first half of the twentieth century that were openly and vehemently criticized during the first decades of the communist regime. A second wave of such “rediscoveries” took place after 1989. Thus in the long run, communist historiography unwillingly contributed to further consolidation of the “national” narrative.

Changes immediately after 1989 led to the revision of some pro-communist and pro-Russian interpretations, but once again the narrative as a whole remained unchallenged. Even scholars who tried to go beyond the problematic usually treated in publications on the *Vǎzrazhdane*, to apply new approaches and to research new topics, followed the main lines of the existing paradigm. Recent publications on relatively “neutral” topics from the field of social history continue to associate all new trends during the nineteenth century with the Revival. Let us briefly look at a few examples.

Ivan Ilchev examined the phenomenon of advertising during the *Vǎzrazhdane*,⁴² mostly in periodicals. This was a completely new field of inquiry that had nothing to do with the interests of traditional national historiography. Nevertheless, advertising as an innovation was contextualized in the national Revival, and the book examined what the “Bulgarian of the time of the Revival” (*vǎzrozhdenskiyat bălgarin*) advertised, and where and how he advertised it. This approach could be challenged in two respects. First, advertising is related to commerce, which by definition was the activity where all different communities of the Ottoman world mixed. Second, this innovation has no direct connection with the Revival as a national movement.

Rayna Gavrilova’s monograph *The Wheel of Life: Everyday Life in the Bulgarian Town during the Revival* presents urban life and its transformations during that time through the prism of everyday life.⁴³ This is certainly innovative compared to other studies on the same topic that are published in Bulgaria. The problem is that, like in all traditionalist studies, most of the innovations

42 Ivan Ilchev, *Reklamata prez Vǎzrazhdaneto* (Sofia: AI Marin Drinov, 1995).

43 Rayna Gavrilova, *Koleloto na zhivota. Vsekidnevieto na bălgarskiya vǎzrozhdenski grad* (Sofia: Sv. Kliment Ohridski, 1999) (English edition: *Bulgarian Urban Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* [Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1999]).

are seen as part of the national Revival. The book gives a relatively well-informed picture of the traditional Ottoman city, but the modernization policies of the Tanzimat period are completely ignored, despite the fact that in the 1990s they had already been extensively studied in Western historiography.

Nadya Manolova's interdisciplinary study *Times of Plague* examines a topic almost unknown in traditional Bulgarian historiography—medical history and sanitation, more precisely, the last epidemics and the eradication of the plague in Ottoman Bulgaria. The book somehow combines the approach of foreign scholarship with the preoccupations of Bulgarian historiography. The eradication of the plague, for instance, is explained by both the transformations within the “Bulgarian community” at the time of the Early Revival and the “considerable reform efforts in the Ottoman Empire during the first half of the nineteenth century.”⁴⁴

As a result, such innovative studies in fact reified the concept of Revival and further strengthened the established view that everything new at that time was related to or part of it. Almost a century ago, the geographer Anastas Ishirkov wrote in a study on seventeenth-century Sofia that publications on Bulgarian history under Ottoman rule usually ignore the common trends in the life of Bulgarians and Turks and limit themselves only to “Bulgarian uprisings and the *Văzrazhdane*.”⁴⁵ To a large extent, this remains true of the dominant trend in Bulgarian historiography to the present day. Even though innovative studies avoid the traditional preoccupation with uprisings, they still keep the paradigm of the *Văzrazhdane*.

In the Albanian case the concept of *Rilindja* as a historical era crystallized even later, which obviously reflects the fact that Albanian independence came long after Bulgarian independence. During the interwar period, publications on Albanian history usually identified the major events and the main political and intellectual figures of the national movement before 1912 but did not name it *Rilindja* nor present it as a clearly defined era.⁴⁶ The concept emerged in the 1930s and developed fully only after World War II, under the communist regime. The new directions were discussed at special meetings of Albanian historians in 1952, 1964 and 1970.⁴⁷ The concept of *Rilindja* as a major historical

44 Nadya Manolova-Nikolova, *Chumavite vremena (1700–1850)* (Sofia: IF'94, 2004), 249.

45 Anastas Ishirkov, *Grad Sofia prez XVII vek* (Sofia: Sofiysko arheologicheskio druzhestvo, 1912), 3.

46 E.g., Roberto Almaglia, *L'Albania* (Rome: Paolo Cremonese, 1930), 108–117.

47 Pollo, *Në gjurmë të historisë shqiptare*, 99, 132.

era is already present in publications of the early 1960s⁴⁸ and appears a clear form in the second volume of the *History of Albania*, published in 1965.

The 2002 edition demonstrates how the concept of an era of national Revival crystallized even further, developing at the expense of the Ottoman context. The first (1965) edition presents as the starting point of the *Rilindja* the year 1839, obviously referring to the Edict of Gülhane; the presentation of the Tanzimat reforms is very brief, and it is followed by a much longer part on the “uprisings against the implementation of the Tanzimat in Albania.”⁴⁹ The 2002 edition starts with a more detailed and ideologically clear chapter, “The Albanian National Revival and Its Specific Characteristics,” whose first subchapter is “The National Revival: A New Era.” Further on, the text highlights the “democratic and anti-feudal” dimensions of the *Rilindja*, its connections to the Enlightenment and Europe in general. Concerning the beginning of the Revival, the year 1839, too obviously related to Ottoman history, is now replaced by “the 1830s.” Dating the Revival earlier was not possible because in Albanian historiography the previous decades are regarded as part of another distinct era—the time when semi-independent rulers established themselves in Janina and Shkodër (“The Great Albanian Pashaluks”), the latter of which was subjugated by the central authorities in 1831. Special attention is paid to economic transformations that are considered the basis of the national Revival. Only at that stage does the reader find the brief presentation of the Tanzimat.

In both Bulgarian and Albanian historiography, the idea that the Revival constitutes a distinct historical era is not only generally accepted but also institutionalized. The “Bulgarian Revival” is perceived as a separate field for professional specialization of Bulgarian historians, just like contemporary or medieval history, Byzantine or Ottoman studies. Specialists in the “Bulgarian Revival” have a place reserved in textbooks and curricula at all levels of education: the paradigm of the “Bulgarian Revival” reproduces itself due to a strong institutional inertia.

As a consequence, specialists in Ottoman studies in Bulgaria usually concentrate on the centuries before the Revival, while Ottoman studies on the nineteenth century, for a long time, received only a minor, arguably negligible focus. There is a huge contrast in this regard between the situation in Bulgaria and Ottoman studies in general: in Turkey and in the West, the Tanzimat is among the main directions of research, especially from the 1960s to the

48 Kristo Frashëri, *Histoire de l'Albanie* (Tirana, 1964), 128–129; *Konferenca e parë e studimeve albanologjike. Tiranë, 15–21 nëndor 1962* (Tirana: Universiteti Shtetëtor i Tiranës, 1965), 574 ff.

49 *Historia e Shqipërisë*, vol. 2, 46–49, 56–68.

1980s. At the same time, in Bulgaria there is an abundant historiography on the Revival. The problem is due mainly to the fact that Ottoman studies in Bulgaria developed only after the institutionalization of the studies on the Revival. In fact Ottoman studies on the fourteenth through the eighteenth centuries were one of the leading branches in Bulgarian historiography since the 1950s. Focusing historical research on the nineteenth century exclusively on the Revival broke the link with Ottoman studies and thus inevitably led to a distorted interpretation of this historical period.

Hence it could be concluded that the one-sided image of the “Bulgarian” nineteenth century does not result merely from ignorance: those producing it are educated and well-trained professional scholars. Amateurs who worked in the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century collected all kinds of available information unsystematically; as a consequence, their writings revealed much more about the diversity of the era “before the Liberation,” including its Ottoman dimensions. Modern researchers identify more clearly the object of their research (“Bulgarian Revival”) and abandon everything that goes beyond it regarding both the topics and the sources. The result is a more coherent, but less realistic, picture of the past.

In a similar way, in the Institute of History of the Albanian Academy of Sciences, there is a separate Department of History of the *Rilindja*; at the same time the Ottoman period is studied in a different department together with the Middle Ages.⁵⁰ It comes as no surprise that the *Rilindja* is so clearly presented as a distinct historical era in the editions of the Academy.

Despite the institutional stability, different aspects of the historiography on the Revival started to be questioned. In most cases it is considered too closely connected to the Romantic nationalism of the nineteenth century itself, as well as deeply influenced by the literary works of that time. The political misuse of the words *Vǎzrazhdane/Rilindja* also prompted some scholars to look more critically at the historiographical concept. During the last ten or fifteen years, the problem of the Revival in the Albanian and the Bulgarian case was addressed in quite a different way.

In Bulgaria history-writing changed little, at least initially after 1989, but there was a vivid debate trying to critically re-examine the national historiography of the Bulgarian Revival. The turning point was Roumen Daskalov's book, which analyzed the “national” and the “communist” versions of the grand narrative, as well as the relation of the Revival to different processes in Europe (Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Industrial Revolution,

50 http://www.akti.gov.al/kerkimishkencor/institucione_ash/ih.html, accessed on September 29, 2013.

etc.). The publication of the first edition in Bulgarian in 2002 sparked various comments and discussions;⁵¹ indeed, this article might be considered one of the outcomes of these debates. Some studies elaborated further on the origins of the concept of *Văzrazhdane* and its usages.⁵² Yet Daskalov's approach did not appear *ex nihilo*—already in the 1970s and 1980s, Nikolay Genchev paid special attention to the historiographical interpretations before proposing his own versions.⁵³

In the Albanian case, the historiographical debates were initiated mostly by foreign scholars, but for a long time they did not subject the *Rilindja* to scrutiny. For example, there was nothing on the concept of *Rilindja* in the otherwise insightful collective volumes published in 2002 and 2009.⁵⁴ A promising initiative was a workshop held in Istanbul in July 2010, which discussed the discourse about the *Rilindja* in comparative perspective,⁵⁵ but the fact that the participants' papers were not published demonstrates that the historiographical analysis here is still in the making, or rather, was in the making in 2010.

Actually, the two approaches—critical analysis of the existing historiography and new historical studies that avoid the established paradigm—are complementary. Roumen Daskalov's book was praised but also criticized from different sides. Traditional historiography insisted on the need to use primary archival material. From a different position, other historians insisted on the need to study the Bulgarian Revival in a comparative perspective and, most importantly, to take into account the Ottoman context. That is what exactly what Nathalie Clayer's book on the Albanian national movement offers—a detailed archival study of the Albanian movement itself, of the interventions from foreign powers (especially Austria-Hungary and Italy) as well as deep insight into the Ottoman context. At the same time, in the introduction Clayer

51 There is a short overview of these debates as well as Roumen Daskalov's responses to his critics in the new edition of his book: Roumen Daskalov, *Kak se misli Bălgarskoto vāzrazhdane* (Sofia: Prosveta, 2013), 293–308.

52 Especially the work of Albena Hranova, *Istoriografiya i literatura*, vol. 2, 163 ff., 377 ff.; and vol. 2, 13 ff., 350 ff.

53 Genchev, *Bălgarsko vāzrazhdane*, 14–38.

54 Stefanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer, eds. *Albanian Identities: Myth and History* (London: Hurst and Co., 2002); Oliver Jens Schmitt and Eva Anne Frantz, eds., *Albanische Geschichte: Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009).

55 "Towards a Comparative Review of Awakening/Renaissance Discourse," July 2–4, 2010; organized by Istanbul Bilgi University History Department together with IFEA (Istanbul) and CETOBAC CNRS-EHESS (Bülent Bilmez and Nathalie Clayer).

only briefly mentions the problems arising from the concept of *Rilindja*.⁵⁶ In the book she simply avoids using terms like “*Rilindja*,” “revival,” “awakening” and other recognizable clichés of the national historiography.

The situation continues to change. In the last few years in Bulgaria, the number of historical studies on the nineteenth century that also examine the Ottoman context has been steadily growing.⁵⁷ At the same time, the first studies on the historiographical paradigm of the *Rilindja* have already appeared—it suffices to mention a short but insightful contribution by Rigels Halili.⁵⁸

We would also need to consider the uses of the concept of Enlightenment in the history of the Balkans, and the Greek case is certainly the most important. The “Modern Greek Enlightenment” (*Neoellinikos Diafotismos*),⁵⁹ which is sometimes presented as the “era of the *Diafotismos*,” is seen as an intellectual movement that started around 1750, or more often around 1770, and lasted until the Greek uprising of 1821.

Similarly to the Greek case, Romanian historiography after World War II began to speak of “Enlightenment” in the Danubian Principalities.⁶⁰ The reason for such a parallel is due mostly to the rule of the so-called Phanariots in the Danubian Principalities, while the developments among Romanians in the Habsburg lands remain under-represented in such publications. The Enlightenment in the Serbian case reflects the impact of the Habsburg milieu and developed in the Habsburg lands.⁶¹

56 Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais*, 9–13.

57 E.g., Olga Todorova, “Robskata institutsiya v Bălgariya v perioda na neyniya zalez,” *Istorichesko bădeshte* (2008–2009): 85–141; Svetla Yaneva, *Bălgari—otkupvachi na danătsi văv fiskalnata sistema na Osmanskata imperiya. Kăm istoriyata na bălgarskiya delovi i sotsialen elit prez XIX vek* (Sofia: NBU, 2011), and various studies by Nadezhda Alexandrova, Gergana Georgieva, Margarita Dobрева and Milena Tafrova.

58 Rigels Halili, “‘Rilindja kombëtare’: The Story behind the Name and the Study of the Albanian National Movement,” *Annuario, The Albanian Yearbook of Historical and Anthropological Studies*, vol. 1, Centre for Historical and Anthropological Research, Tirana (2011): 32–55.

59 *Neoellinikos Diafotismos. Vivliografia, 1945–1995*, eds. D.G. Apostolopoulos and E.N. Frankiskos (Athens: KNE/EIE, 1998). In this bibliography, which covers half a century, only seven out of 2,112 titles mention Bulgarians, and five of them are in fact written by Bulgarian authors.

60 Popovici, *La littérature roumaine*; Vlad Georgescu, *Ideile politice și iluminismul în principatele Române, 1750–1831* (Bucharest: EARSR, 1972).

61 E.g., *Istorija srbskog naroda*, vols. 4–1 and 4–2, ed. Slavko Gavrilović (Belgrade: Srbska književna zadruga, 1986).

The idea of “Bulgarian Enlightenment” proved out to be problematic in itself and was gradually abandoned during the last ten to fifteen years. Symptomatic in this regard is the changing focus of the conferences and publications organized by the Bulgarian Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies, created in 1992 as a collective member of the International Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies. Initially, the Bulgarian society intended to study the Bulgarian case as an integral part of the history of Europe and the problems of this era.⁶² Paradoxically, during the first years of the society’s existence, most of its publications dealt with the first half of the nineteenth century, or even up to 1878. In this case Bulgarian scholars simply projected the established approach of their national historiography, which examines the eighteenth and the nineteenth century together as part of the Revival. In this paradigm, the nineteenth century is far more important, while the eighteenth century is seen as its predecessor—there seem to be no specific problems of eighteenth-century development, and scholars simply identify in it the beginnings and early stages of the processes of the nineteenth century. In the late 1990s, one of the leading specialists of the society, Tamara Stoilova, concluded that due to the specificities of the historical development of the Balkans and of Bulgaria in particular, the “Bulgarian eighteenth century” goes well beyond its purely chronological limits and covers a larger period, which includes almost all of the nineteenth century.⁶³ This is in sharp contrast with Western historiography, where eighteenth-century studies often deal with the late seventeenth century, but not with the nineteenth century, dominated after the French Revolution by Romanticism and nationalism.

Several years later, the situation changed completely. Tamara Stoilova again summarized the recent trends, but at this point she adopted a critical view and rightly commented that Bulgarian historians either “adapt” the ideas of eighteenth-century Europe to the realities in Bulgaria and the Balkans at that time, or present nineteenth-century Bulgaria and the Balkans as a projection of eighteenth-century Europe. The need to study the eighteenth century is argued in a quite a different way—“although they were in Europe, Bulgarians did not experience it. This lack could be compensated for somewhat by knowledge of it.”⁶⁴ At present, the activities of the Bulgarian Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies are concentrated on the European Enlightenment, which shows how

62 Tamara Stoilova, “Bălgarsko druzhestvo za izuchavane na XVIII vek. 1992–1998,” *Istoricheskò bādeshte*, no. 2 (1998), 226, 228.

63 *Ibid.*, 226.

64 Tamara Stoilova, “Evropeyskiyat osemnadeseti vek v bălgarskata istoriografiya prez poslednite 15 godini,” in *Predizvikatelstvata na promyanata. Natsionalna nauchna konfer-*

an international framework of research could press historians to avoid some fallacies of the national historiography.

The other cases from the region are also problematic, though during the late eighteenth century there were some intellectuals from these communities who were indeed familiar with the ideas of the European Enlightenment. Yet presenting their interest in the philosophical thought of the time as a full-fledged national intellectual movement akin to the Enlightenment seems to be an attempt at retrospective “Europeanization” of their respective national histories. Even the Modern Greek Enlightenment, just like the other “Balkan” Enlightenments, is entirely a historiographical construct that appeared at a very late stage, in fact after the concept of Revival took a clear shape. Nowadays more and more is written about “the *Diafotismos*,” and it has also gained an important place in history teaching, but a few decades ago the concept was seldom used. The first to write about the *Diafotismos* was Konstantinos Dimaras, in a 1945 article.⁶⁵ Since then, the term has gradually gained popularity, but it is not always used even for the periodization of cultural history. Dimaras himself, in his *History of Modern Greek Literature*, did not call the relevant section “The *Diafotismos*” or “Era of the *Diafotismos*,” and he uses the term only sporadically.⁶⁶ He seems hesitant to present the *Diafotismos* as something identical to the Enlightenment, and in his short book *Greece during the Age of the Enlightenment*, published in French in 1969, the term appears in German (*Aufklärung*), perhaps because an expression like “the *Lumières* in Greece” would have sounded strange to the French public.⁶⁷

There were attempts, at least in Bulgaria, to see the *Vǎzrazhdane* as an equivalent of the Enlightenment,⁶⁸ and in Albanian historiography such a parallel also appears.⁶⁹ Foreign scholars, with very few exceptions, did not accept these speculations. The attempts to see the Modern Greek Enlightenment in a

entsiya (Sofia, 10–11 noemvri 2004), eds. Iskra Baeva and Plamen Mitev (Sofia: Sv. Kliment Ohridski, 2006), 117 and 123.

65 Konstantinos Dimaras, “I Galliki Epanastasi kai o Ellinikos Diafotismos gyro sta 1800,” in *Dimokratika Hronika*, no. 6 (1945): 11–12. Quoted in *Neoellinikos Diafotismos. Vivliografia*, 9–10. By coincidence the first publication presenting Romanian literature at the age of the Enlightenment appears the same year: Dimitrie Popovici, *La littérature roumaine à l'époque des Lumières* (Sibiu: La Transilvania, 1945).

66 Konstantinos Dimaras, *Istoria tis Neoellinikis Logotehnias*, 9th ed. (Athens: Gnosi, 2000), 187 ff. (1st ed., 1949).

67 Dimaras, *La Grèce au temps des Lumières*.

68 Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation*, 32 ff.

69 Masar Stavileci, *Iluminizmi në letërsinë e Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare* (Tirana: Rilindja, 1990); Masar Stavileci, *Iluminizmi shqiptar* (Tirana: Toena, 2000).

comparative Balkan perspective do not consider the Bulgarian Revival (or any other development among Bulgarians) as its equivalent.⁷⁰

Enlightenment (in the Greek case, but also in the Romanian and the Serbian one) and national Revival (Bulgarian or Albanian) could not be considered the same thing, due to one very important difference. The *Diafotismos* is seen as a part (peripheral and delayed) of *one* European process. However, in the case of the *Văzrazhdane*, parallels are drawn with the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, modern nationalism, modernization, industrialization, and so on. Some leading Bulgarian historians insist that the Revival corresponded not to one or another of these processes, but to all of them.⁷¹

Unlike the *Văzrazhdane/Rilindja*, the “era of the *Diafotismos*” refers only to intellectual history and is not accepted in the general periodization of Greek history.⁷² One can find such a section in studies on cultural history (such as book printing⁷³) but not in works on general history. While publications on the *Diafotismos* are clearly focused on cultural and intellectual history, those on the Bulgarian or Albanian Revival present everything that happened during the respective period.⁷⁴ In the Romanian case as well, the “Enlightenment”

70 Paschalis Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-Eastern Europe* (Variorum, 1994), article 1, “The Enlightenment East and West: A Comparative Perspective on the Ideological Origin of the Balkan Political Traditions” (1983). Kitromilides is particularly skeptical about the idea of considering Paisiy Hilendarski a figure of the Enlightenment. Still, a parallel between *Diafotismos* and Bulgarian revival might be found in a short article by Dimitris Stamatopoulos, published in Bulgarian: “Opit za sravnitelnai analiz na bălgarskoto i grătskoto natsionalno dvizhenie,” in *Bălgarsko vāzrazhdane. Idei, lichnosti, sābitiā*, vol. 10 (Sofia: OBK Vasil Levski, 2008), 205–210.

71 Genchev, “Za osnovnoto sādārzhanie,” 44; cf. Daskalov, *Kak se misli*, 39–96.

72 For instance, in the above-quoted *Istoria tou Ellinikou ethnous* (vol. 11), the Modern Greek Enlightenment is presented with a text by Konstantinos Dimaras (pp. 328–359). However, education, literature and other such topics are presented separately.

73 E.g., *Pentakosia Hronia Entypis Paradosis tou Neou Ellinismou (1499–1999)*, eds. K. Sp. Staikos and T.E. Sklavenitis (Athens: Vouli ton Ellinon, 2000), 49–60.

74 Main works: Konstantinos Dimaras, *Neoellinikos Diaphotismos*, 6th ed. (Athens: Ermis, 1993) (1st ed., 1977), a collection of articles including two general overviews of the topic, articles about A. Korais and D. Katardzis, about education during the last decade of the eighteenth century, and about the perception of Voltaire’s work in Greece; Paschalis Kitromilides, *Neoellinikos Diaphotismos*, 2nd ed. (Athens: Morfotiko Idryma Ethnikis Trapezis, 1999) (1st ed., 1996), a translation of Kitromilides’s PhD dissertation from Harvard: *Tradition, Enlightenment and Revolution* (1978); Panagiotis Kondylis, *O Neoellinikos Diaphotismos. Oi filosofikes idees* (Athens: Themelio, 2000) (1st ed., 1988), a collection of articles on notions like philosophy and metaphysics, about Korais, the heliocentric system, and so on.

never appears as a distinct period in general periodization, despite the fact that several publications use the expression “during the era of the Enlightenment.”⁷⁵

During the most recent debates about the *Vázrazhdane* in Bulgaria, many scholars insisted that other such “revivals” and “awakenings” took place in nineteenth-century Europe, and they pointed primarily to the “Czech Revival.”⁷⁶ Actually the parallels with the Czech case are impressive. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Czech intellectuals used to speak of “rebirth” (*znovuzrozený*), “awakening” (*probuzení*) and “resurrection” (*vzkříšení*). Finally the term “revival” (*obrození*)—more precisely, “Czech national revival” (*české národní obrození*)—was imposed. The main figures of the Revival are “awakeners” (*buditele*), and the Revival put an end to a “dark age” (*temná doba*).⁷⁷ The Revival includes a conscious preference for the mother tongue, its further elaboration and standardization, and the creation of a new national culture in Czech (in the press, literature and theater).⁷⁸

More generally, the “national revival” or “awakening” is considered a common process for the peoples of the Habsburg Empire.⁷⁹ Very similar descriptions could be found for other Slav peoples such as Slovaks.⁸⁰ “The awakening of the nations” (*a nemzetiségek ébredése*) in Hungarian historiography also coincides with the “national revival” among Czechs and has much the same

75 First such publications usually in foreign languages: Popovici, *La littérature roumaine*; Constantin Dimaras, *La Grèce au temps des Lumières* (Geneva: Droz, 1969); Nicolae Isar, *Principatele Române în epoca Luminilor (1770–1830)*. *Cultura, spiritul critic, geneza ideii naționale* (Bucharest: Editura Universității București, 1999).

76 They refer mostly to Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). A newer one is Miroslav Hroch, *V národním zájmu: požadavky a cíle evropských národních hnutí devatenáctého století ve srovnávací perspektivě* (Prague: Lidové noviny, 1999).

77 H. LeCaine Agnew, *Origins of the Czech National Renaissance* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), 4–10.

78 Besides the works of M. Hroch and H. LeCaine Agnew, see Vladimír Macura, “Problems and Paradoxes of the National Revival,” in *Bohemia in History*, ed. M. Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 182–197; *Cheshkoto vázrazhdane—prochiti i pochertsí*, eds. Sl. Dimitrova, M. Kuzmova and V. Penchev (Sofia: Bohemia Club/Stigmati, 2006), reprinted in *Homo Bohemicus*, nos. 2–3 (2006).

79 Robert W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* (London: Hutchinson, 1943), 258.

80 Peter Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening: An Essay in the Intellectual History of East Central Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976); Stanislav Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1995), 89.

characteristics.⁸¹ A similar development is to be found among Croats,⁸² and also Slovenes,⁸³ but here more attention is paid to the impact of the French Revolution, insofar as the Napoleonic Wars led to the creation of the “Illyrian provinces” (1809–1813/16).

The parallels between the Bulgarian Revival and the “revivals” and “awakenings” in Central Europe are due primarily to the direct influence of the more developed Slav nations but also to the fact that the historiographical concept was borrowed from there. The channels of transfer are relatively well known, and the first and the best-documented case is that of Yuriy Venelin (1802–1839), who was born and educated in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Empire. In his book *Bulgarians of Old and Today* (1829) and in his private letters, Venelin advocated the need for a “revival” of the Bulgarians (he was apparently the first to do so). The idea was further developed by Vasil Aprilov and later (after his contacts with Aprilov) by Ivan Seliminski—the first Bulgarians to write about the *vǎzrazhdane* of their nation.⁸⁴

There is one important difference between the “revivals” that are examined here and those in Central Europe. The Revival in the Bulgarian and Albanian cases was a movement that resulted in the creation of a national state. For the peoples of the Habsburg Empire, it was a wave of political and intellectual activity of one or two generations until the mid-nineteenth century. Later, the peoples were already “revived” and “awakened,” but their “national life” continued within the Habsburg Empire. Symptomatic of the difference between these two interpretations is Konstantin Jireček’s perception of the Bulgarian Revival. In his *History of the Bulgarians*, he presents as *Bǎlgarsko vǎzrazhdane* developments until the 1830s and 1840s,⁸⁵ which corresponds to the concept of the Czech Revival as a wave of awakening in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century.

81 E.g., Iván Bertényi and Gábor Gyapay, *Magyarország rövid története* (Budapest: Maecenas, 1993), 320–321; *Millenniumi magyar történet: Magyarország története a honfoglalástól napjainkig*, ed. István György Tóth (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001), 331–374.

82 Although the narrative usually starts with the reforms of Joseph II, what is understood as a “Croat national revival” (*hrvatski narodni preporod*) is mainly the activities of the Illyrian movement under Ludevit Gaj in the 1830s and 1840s: Trpimir Mačan, *Povijest hrvatskoga naroda*, 2nd ed. (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1992), 274 ff.; Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 58 ff.; Ludwig Steindorff, *Kroatien. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2001), 98–101.

83 Janko Prunk, *A Brief History of Slovenia: Historical Background of the Republic of Slovenia* (Ljubljana: Grad, 2000), 58 ff.

84 Daskalov, *Kak se misli*, 13–14, 31–32.

85 Konstantin Jireček, *Istoriya na bǎlgarite* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1978), 553–559, 575.

Because the revival in the Albanian and Bulgarian cases led to independence, it was much more important for the respective national historiographies than the “revivals” in Central Europe. In the latter cases, it was only one of several stages in the national development. The idea of the liberation as a culmination of the revival had one more effect. In the Bulgarian case the movement for political independence that started in the 1860s and 1870s was initially regarded as something distinct from the Revival, and publications of the time often differentiated between “spiritual revival” and “political revival.” Gradually, the revolutionary movement started to be regarded not only as an integral part of the Revival but even as its most mature expression.

In all cases in Central Europe, that is, in the Habsburg Empire, the “revival” is only a national process, despite the fact that communist historiography was looking for its “socioeconomic background.”⁸⁶ The period as a whole is not called “revival” in academic publications.⁸⁷ Some popularizations use this term to refer to the period 1780/1790–1848,⁸⁸ rarely until 1867,⁸⁹ but even in these cases there is no “Age of the Revival” in which everything is related to the “revival.” Starting from the 1990s, in Slovak historiography the term “Slovak national revival” (*národné obrodenie*) was often replaced by the “formation of the modern Slovak nation.”⁹⁰ Generally, even if there is a “revival” among Czechs, Croats, or other peoples, unlike Albanian and Bulgarian historiography, they do not see the “revival” as a distinct era in history-writing.

Attempts to apply Miroslav Hroch’s model (the well-known A, B and C phases of the national movement) to the Bulgarian Revival demonstrate that it does not fit the realities of the Ottoman Balkans well.⁹¹ The problem is that

86 In the respective part of the history of Slovakia, published at the end of the communist period (*Dejiny Slovenska*, vol. 2 [1526–1848] [Bratislava: Veda, 1987]) the period 1780–1848 is examined in two separate chapters: chap. 4, “Political Development and Socioeconomic Changes,” and chap. 5, “Slovak National Revival.”

87 E.g., Jitka Lněničková, *České země v době předbřeznové, 1792–1848* (Prague: Libri, 1999).

88 Seton-Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks*, chap. 10, “The Rebirth of Czech Nationality (1790–1848);” Antoine Marès, *Histoire des Pays tchèques et slovaque* (Paris: Hatier, 1995), 197, 239; *Magyar kódex*, vol. 4, ed. József Szentpéteri (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2000), 7 ff., chapter “A nemzetté válás kora (1790–1848);” etc.

89 S. Harrison Thomson, *Czechoslovakia in European History* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1965), 187 ff.

90 *Lexikón slovenských dejín*, ed. Dušan Škvarna (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1997), 90; Dušan Kováč, *Dejiny Slovenska* (Bratislava: Lidové Noviny, 1998), 87–88.

91 Raymond Detrez, “The Bulgarian National Movement in the Light of Miroslav Hroch’s Analysis of National Revival in Europe” (2004), http://cf.hum.uva.nl/natlearn/Balkan/athens_detrez.html, accessed on September 29, 2013; cf. Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young*

the model is extrapolated from a different type of national movement that developed in Central Europe. In the Bulgarian case, Slavic influences were very important, but the Ottoman context was more powerful. As a consequence, despite its “Czech” phraseology, the Bulgarian Revival is more similar to the Albanian one.

The substantial differences between the “revivals” in the Habsburg Empire and those in the Ottoman Empire could be best seen in history-writing in Yugoslavia. The few works trying to present the national revivals (*nacionalni preporodi*) of all Yugoslav peoples encountered serious difficulties, because these processes did not develop in the same way in the different cases (“*kod jugoslovenskih naroda teku nejednako*”), and it was hard to find a counterpart to the Croatian and Slovenian Revival among the other Yugoslav nations. Problems derive from both the chronology and the content of the various *preporodi*. Of course, there is very little to say about the Macedonian revival in the first half of the nineteenth century, until 1848. The Serbian Revival covers activities after the creation of the autonomous principality.⁹² One Bulgarian historian, writing an overview of Croatian history, seems surprised by the fact that the “revival” among Croats developed significantly differently than in other “Balkan” nations.⁹³ More generally, it is misleading to think of national revivals as being in the “Balkans” or in “Southeastern Europe” because they developed either in the Habsburg Empire or in the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Context of the National Revivals

It would not be sufficient to say that while studying nineteenth-century Bulgarian, Albanian or Balkan history, one needs to take into account the Ottoman context, just as it should be and is done in many cases for the previous four centuries. The main thesis here is that the national revivals can be understood only in the context of the changes that took place in the Empire during and after the Tanzimat.

From a chronological point of view, we can clearly see that the concept of the Revival era appears in the historiography of the countries that acquired independence after the Tanzimat—Bulgaria, Albania and Macedonia. In

Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Second Constitutional Period of the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 11.

92 Milodrag Ekmečić, in *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 3rd ed. (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1973), 199 ff. I am grateful to Maciej Czerwinski for directing my attention to this exceptional case of applying the concept of *preporod* to the history of all Yugoslav peoples.

93 Rumyana Bozhilova, *Istoriya na Hărvatiya* (Sofia: Abagar, 1998), 141.

countries that achieved independence before the Tanzimat, the “new era” starts either with the beginning of the uprising that led to the creation of their new state (1804 for Serbia; 1821 for Greece) or, in the Romanian case, with the end of the rule of the Phanariots (i.e., again in 1821). On the other hand, Turkish historiography and, accordingly, Ottoman studies also see a new era in the nineteenth century. It is not called “Revival” or “Renaissance”—this is *the era of reforms*, the Tanzimat. Therefore, one needs to examine more carefully the entanglements between the “era of the Revival” and “the era of reforms.”

Of course, we must also consider general trends in Europe in the nineteenth century, but concerning the Tanzimat period there is no contradiction between these two explanatory models. In fact, the Ottoman authorities initiated a process of Europeanization and became the most enthusiastic promoter of the European model. The reforms were a powerful transfer mechanism, and in many domains only the state could serve as a channel, especially concerning the legislative and administrative framework.

At the same time, starting in the 1830s, communications with Europe improved dramatically, mainly due to steamboating in the Mediterranean, and also in part to steamboating on the Danube. Later on, especially after the 1880s, railways made possible even better connections. All that meant faster and regular commercial and postal connections; after the Crimean War the establishment of direct telegraph lines with Europe allowed the Ottoman elites to live in daily contact with Europe, at least concerning political news. In sum, the Tanzimat period coincided with a boom in the exchange of both goods and ideas with the West, and in this regard the last decades under the Ottomans were very different for the Bulgarian and especially the Albanian elites from what their Greek and Serbian counterparts lived through in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In Bulgarian historiography it is generally argued that the reforms in the Ottoman Empire remained “on paper,” and what Bulgarian historians have in mind is that the promised “equality” between Muslim and non-Muslim never materialized. In fact, this is a well-known complaint of the non-Muslims of that time, which was reproduced in later history books. Still, it should be emphasized that to the extent these reforms were implemented, they were an important precondition for the process of the Bulgarian Revival. Contemporaries (including Vasil Aprilov and Georgi Rakovski) and many authors of the old school (such as Petăr Nikov) repeatedly stressed that.⁹⁴

94 Petăr Nikov, *Vāzrazhdane na bălgarskiya narod. Tsārkovno-natsionalni borbi i dostizheniya* (Sofia: [1929]), 25.

Actually, many phenomena in the Bulgarian community that are considered part of the Revival were at least partly due to the reforms. The involvement of the secular elite in Church administration was required by the authorities with the reform edict of 1856; the independence of the Bulgarian Church (1870) coincided with the codification of the *millet* system in the 1860s; and the development of modern education among Bulgarians was encouraged by the state policy of promoting education, including among non-Muslims.⁹⁵

In its initial stages, the Albanian national movement also benefited from the more liberal climate of the Tanzimat. Some patriotic initiatives from the late 1860s to the early 1880s often benefited from state support or at least sympathy. Far more important was the crisis of 1877–1878, when Ottoman authorities tried to make use of Albanian national feelings in order to counterbalance territorial claims on some Albanian-populated areas of the imperial possessions (the League of Prizren). Later, the liberalization after 1908 again played a positive role for the Albanian national movement, but the increasingly oppressive nature of the new regime alienated most of the Albanian elites.

More importantly, the Tanzimat reforms did not seek only to establish equality between all subjects. Therefore their outcome could not be judged, as Bulgarian historiography usually does, only by examining the improvement or non-improvement of the position of non-Muslims. Reforms were not limited to centralization either, as they are presented in Albanian historiography. The nineteenth-century reforms in the Ottoman Empire represent a set of measures seeking to modernize the empire in all domains—the army, police, taxes, public administration, law, judiciary, transport and communication, education, health, and so on. It suffices to look at the content of the collective volumes published in Turkey on occasions like the 100th or 150th anniversary of the Tanzimat in order to see the vast and ambitious scope of the reforms.⁹⁶ Obviously, state initiatives and interventions were not equally successful in all domains, especially in the provinces. But it would be misleading to

95 Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9–10.

96 For example, *Tanzimat, I. Yüzdüncü yıldönümünü münasebetile* (Ankara: Maarif Matbaası, 1940); *Tanzimat'ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu*. Ankara: 31 Ekim–3 Kasım 1989 (Ankara: TTK, 1991); *150. Yılında Tanzimat*, ed. H.D. Yıldız (Ankara: TTK, 1992); *Tanzimat. Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, eds. H. İnalçık and M. Seyitdanlıoğlu (Ankara: Phoenix, 2006).

conclude, as some Bulgarian historians did, that the modernity of the Revival era occurred without state pressure or control.⁹⁷

Transformations in Ottoman society resulted from a more general trend of modernization of public administrations, as well as from the impact of technological development on life within the Empire. For example, the telegraph substantially helped to centralize the administration from the late 1850s onwards. By their very nature, the changes in the Ottoman Empire from the nineteenth century make it even more important to take into account the Ottoman context. Although Bulgarian historiography presents the Revival as an era of increasingly widespread struggle for spiritual and political independence, in reality this was a time when the central government had increasing control and influence over the lives of its subjects. Ignoring the impact of the Ottoman authorities during and after the Tanzimat is even more problematic than for any other earlier period.

Reforms in the army are almost ignored in Bulgarian historiography, but it should be taken into account that the reorganization of the army was in fact the core of nineteenth-century Ottoman reforms, something that is only natural for a “defensive modernization.” Attempts to modernize the army logically led to the ambition to improve taxation and local administration. Many constructions in the provinces, as well as the building of new infrastructure, were intended to serve the needs of the army but were also used by the larger public. In many places, military engineers helped plan civilian buildings, and military doctors usually served the local civilian population as well. Given that half of the empire’s budget was spent on the army, the military reforms deserve more attention.

Legal reforms also deserve more attention: as early as 1878, the new Bulgarian principality inherited a fairly Europeanized legislation that served for the next decade or two. The organization of the local administration, the judiciary and the tax system was also evaluated as appropriate for the needs of the new principality; they were not replaced but further reformed and modernized.

Even the intellectual climate of the *Vǎzrazhdane* (and even more so of the Albanian national movement) corresponded in many regards to the spirit of the Tanzimat: there was a belief in science and technical progress, education, and the idea that society had entered a new era in which progress would rapidly be achieved in all spheres. Both “Muslim Turkish-speaking” and “Orthodox Bulgarian-speaking” intellectuals felt obliged to “educate” the still-unenlightened and confused people. Both sought to resolve the paradoxical task of

97 Desislava Lilova, “Vǎzrozhdenskiyat proekt za geografski rechnik na bǎlgarskite zemi,” *Balkanistischen forum*, nos. 1–3 (2004): 20.

learning from the more developed European countries while still asserting one's own identity.

There are parallels even in areas where they would be least expected—such as in funding. It is widely accepted that donations played a crucial role in the national Revival because there was no national state to invest in initiatives of interest exclusively to the Bulgarians. Churches and schools were built with money provided by rich patriots; donations also helped in publishing many books and periodicals, in sending young boys to study abroad, and even in arming military bands in order to fight for national liberation, and later on in supporting those captured and put in prison or sent into exile.⁹⁸ But the Ottoman authorities also did their best to make use of this traditional religious virtue, which was already disguised by a new patriotic and civic discourse, in order to finance, at least partially, the new initiatives. Ottoman officials, guilds, local communities and various individuals donated money to construct different administrative buildings, state hospitals and schools, connect telegraph lines, and even to establish new factories, construct military barracks and buy new firearms.

There are a number of surprising entanglements even between the official propaganda of Ottoman patriotism and the various national movements, which resulted from the long competition between the two sides.⁹⁹ Another interesting phenomenon is that many of those involved in the revolutionary movements also occupied various positions in the local Ottoman administration, as officials or members of various administrative councils and mixed courts established during the Tanzimat period.¹⁰⁰ National historiographies seem uneasy about dealing with these paradoxes. For instance, there is no explanation of how it was possible for many major figures of the *Rilindja* (like Ismail Kemal and Pashko Vasa) to serve in the Ottoman administration. The positions achieved by such Albanians are regarded as a proof and recognition of their personal qualities, which does not preclude denouncing the despotism of the Ottoman regime. On the contrary, the most highly-ranked person

98 Dechko Lechev, *Daritelstvoto prez Văzrazhdaneto* (Shumen: Iliya R. Blăskov, 1993); Plamen Mitev, ed., *Daritelstvo i vzaimopomosht v bălgarskoto obshtestvo (xvi–nachaloto na xx vek)* (Sofia: IF-94, 2003).

99 In more detail in vol. 1 of our series: "Formulating and Reformulating Ottomanism," in *Balkan Histories: Connected, Shared, Entangled*, vol. 1: *National Ideologies and Language Policies*, eds. Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 241–271.

100 In more detail: Alexander Vezekov, "In the Service of the Sultan, in the Service of the Revolution: Local Bulgarian Notables in the 1870s," in *Conflicting Loyalties in the Balkans: The Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and Nation-Building*, eds. H. Grandits, N. Clayer and R. Pichler (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 135–154.

among them, Ferid Paşa—a well-known figure of the Albanian movement at that time, who served as Grand Vizier under Abdulhamid II, and then as minister of interior under the Young Turks—seems completely forgotten.¹⁰¹ In a similar way Bulgarian historiography presents the career in official administration of figures like Stephan Bogoridi and Stoyan Chomakov.

Finally, it seems that the sense of entering a new era came from the official propaganda of the Tanzimat reformers and was subsequently adopted by the intellectual and political leaders of the various communities in the Empire. Their remarks that they were living in a “new era,” one “of constant improvement and progress,” generally refer to the benevolent acts of the sultans. Bulgarian historiography conceives the Revival as a process of slow, progressive development that started “from below.” But the very feeling of a new era actually came from above and represented a common phenomenon for the Ottoman Empire as a whole.

In order to create a feeling of entering a “new age” (of the “Revival”), it was important to have not only a process defined as a “revival” but also the sense of a radical and fundamental change, a new beginning. But the Revival was by its very nature a gradual process and could not create such a sense by itself. The official propaganda proved capable of doing so and created the sense of a major turning point. This explains why on the one hand, in the Bulgarian and even in the Albanian case one started to see a new beginning in the 1820s, respectively in the 1830s, despite the fact that the process was initially very weak.¹⁰² At the same time, despite the much wider activities among Greeks before 1821, there was never a feeling of entering a “new era.” In the Bulgarian case, while Aprilov and Rakovski openly referred to the reforms as the beginning of the Revival, the leading figures of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, like Paisiy or Sofroniy, never claimed that they were living in a “new era.”¹⁰³

101 Diplomat [Nikola Rizov], *Albanskoto vǎzrazhdane* (Sofia: Hr. Oltchev, 1909), 10–11, 35.

102 In fact Albanian authors of the pre-communist period considered the League of Prizren, 1878–1881, to be the beginning of the *Rilindja* (*Historia e Shqipërisë*, vol. 2 [1965], 20). The same is true of those working in emigration after World War II: Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878–1912*. The aforementioned Bulgarian diplomat Nikola Rizov also believed that the “Albanian revival” started in the 1870s: Rizov, *Albanskoto vǎzrazhdane*, 4. Obviously, unlike in the Bulgarian case, the idea that the *Rilindja* started at the same time as the Tanzimat was introduced only at a later stage.

103 A good illustration is the collection of nineteenth-century texts on the Bulgarian revival: *Vǎzgleđi za Vǎzrazhdaneto*, vols. 1–2, ed. Iliya Konev (Sofia: Sv. Kliment Ohridski, 1995). The earliest texts included in the volume date from the early 1840s and belong to Neofit Rilski (1793–1881) and Ivan Seliminski (1799–1867); there is nothing written by Paisiy

The appeals for the “awakening” of the Bulgarian people and the official propaganda that a “new era” started with the reforms quickly and easily found a common language. This is evident in the case of the aforementioned Vasil Aprilov—he accepted Venelin’s suggestions that the Bulgarians needed to be “awakened/revived” and at the same time insisted that the starting point for this “revival” was the reforms of Mahmud II (Aprilov referred to the elimination of Janissaries).¹⁰⁴ It is an open question whether Aprilov was really evaluating the results of the first reforms or was simply following the paradigm of the enlightened ruler as initiator of the “revival.” National revivals in the Habsburg Empire were a reaction to centralization and Germanization, but the reforms introduced by Joseph II were an important precondition (Patent of Toleration, 1781; Abolition of Serfdom, 1781).¹⁰⁵

Surprisingly, at first glance most of the “revival processes” fit into traditional Turkish historiography. The building of schools and churches, the creation of an independent Church and of autonomous local institutions, the printing of books and newspapers—all these were promised and supported by the sultan and his government, and it is claimed that non-Muslims received greater advantages than Muslims. Concerning economic development, there would be also consensus. Turkish historiography and Ottoman studies see the Tanzimat as a time of economic growth from which non-Muslims particularly benefited.

In both Ottoman studies and Bulgarian historiography, post-1878 developments demonstrate the need to reconsider the optimistic overtones in the grand narrative about the Tanzimat and the Revival, respectively. Studies on the new Bulgarian principality usually insist that in many respects the modernization of the society started from a very low level. The Tanzimat also gave limited results in the short run, just like the Revival—much of the reform program was implemented during the reign of Abdulhamid II. Even in the Albanian case, there was a feeling that the new country was starting almost from zero. In the long run, the whole story of the profound social and political transformation during the (national) Revival is as problematic as the presentation of the Tanzimat as a successful modernization effort.

Hilendarski, Sofroniy Vrachanski or even Petăr Beron, who are otherwise considered leading figures of the Early Revival.

104 Vasil Aprilov, *Săbrani săchineniya*, ed. Mihail Arnaudov (Sofia: Pridvorna pechatnitsa, 1940), 51 (*Dennitsa*, 1841) and 170–172 (*Dopălnenie kăm Dennitsata*, 1842).

105 Macura, “Problems and Paradoxes of the National Revival,” 184.

At a very early stage, in the 1870s, Bulgarian historiography accepted that the Revival started with a manuscript called *History of the Slavo-Bulgarians* written by the monk Paisiy in 1762. Later, there were several debates over whether the Revival started with the writing of this particular book, whether it started in the early or mid-eighteenth century (according to the main versions), or even whether it started at the beginning of the seventeenth century, as some (such as Gandev) claimed.¹⁰⁶ Still, there is very little evidence to support that the Revival began in the eighteenth century—only a few unpublished manuscripts and a couple of business initiatives, subsequently defined as “manufactures” (pre-industrial systems of mass production based on manual labor). This is supplemented by further information about “the decline of Turkey” and the wars that the Empire lost in the eighteenth century. As a result, although the dominant view holds that the Revival is almost two centuries long, in the official version the first 100–120 years are presented very briefly, and the majority of publications deal with the last few decades before 1878.¹⁰⁷

Although hardly convincing, the idea that the Revival started in the eighteenth century or even earlier had important consequences: it helped to obscure the role of the nineteenth-century reforms. The long debates about the “beginning” of the process are irrelevant here. If the Revival started at any point during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the reforms simply could no longer be seen as a starting point—they appear well after the beginning of the grand narrative and remain marginal. In the now-dominant interpretation, the Revival is seen as a Bulgarian movement that benefited from some foreign influences from the West, sometimes via the Greeks, the Serbians and Russia.¹⁰⁸ Concerning Ottoman history, Bulgarian historians discuss primarily the “decline” of the empire from the sixteenth century onwards, as well as the sufferings of the Bulgarian population.¹⁰⁹

106 In fact, there is no fundamental difference between these versions, and they are easily interchangeable. For example, Hristo Gandev first advocated the year 1700 (in *Ranno vāzrazhdane*, 1939) but in his next book readily switched to another round number, the year 1600 (*Faktori*, 1943).

107 Nikolay Gentchev was one of the ardent defenders of the thesis that the “Revival” started at the beginning of the eighteenth century (*Bālgarsko vāzrazhdane*, 1988, 5–9), but he presented the “Early Revival” very briefly (in some fifty pages, while devoting around 300 to the rest). Similarly, in *Istoriya na Bālgariya* (published by the Academy of Sciences), which also accepts that the era started at the beginning of the eighteenth century, only one-fifth of the text deals with the “Early Revival” (vol. 5, 1985, 21–223), while more than half of the text presents the last two decades, 1856–1878 (vol. 6, 1987, 27–543).

108 Penev, *Nachaloto*, 22 ff.; Shishmanov, *Ot Paisiya do Rakovski*, 94 ff.

109 Penev, *Nachaloto*, 38–51.

As already mentioned, some Bulgarian historians advocated that the year 1600 should be conventionally accepted as the beginning of the national Revival.¹¹⁰ In fact, in more traditionalist Turkish historiography and Ottoman studies, the same year is considered the end of the “Classical Age” and the beginning of the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The same logic could be found in some more traditionalist studies on Greek history that see a direct link between the decline of Ottoman rule and the upheaval of the Greek movement starting (according to these views) as early as the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries.

Studies on the “causes” and “preconditions” of the Revival turned out to be particularly misleading, as did those on the “Early Revival” that were written by some of the leading authors of the first half of the twentieth century, such as Ivan Shishmanov,¹¹¹ Boyan Penev¹¹² and Hristo Gandev.¹¹³ They describe how medieval “Bulgarian” traditions were in fact preserved during the first centuries of Ottoman rule,¹¹⁴ as well as process of gradual “awakening” starting from below. Emblematic in this regard is the description of the process of “Bulgarization” of towns and cities due to the influx of peasants fleeing the unrest provoked by the so-called *kırcalı* and the abuses of the local rulers. This wave of migration is regarded as an important precondition for the Bulgarian Revival in urban milieus.¹¹⁵

Later, scholars questioned a number of specific theses but generally followed the main paradigm of the Revival as an era. A number of studies questioned the impact of Paisiy,¹¹⁶ but he still remains the first major figure of the Revival. The *Văzrazhdane* is presented as a process intrinsic to the Bulgarian community, born of its own needs and internal logic, encouraged to a certain extent by European (including Russian) influences. Concerning the relations between the Bulgarian Revival and the Ottoman context, to the extent it is examined at

110 Gandev, *Faktori*; Mitev, *Bălgarskoto vāzrazhdane*, 9.

111 Ivan Shishmanov, “Uvod v istoriyata na *bălgarskoto vāzrazhdane*,” in *Bălgariya hilyada godini (927–1927)* (Sofia: MNP, 1930), 279–319; “Paisiy i negovata epoha,” *Spisanie na BAN* 8 (1914), 1–18. Quoted in Ivan Shishmanov, *Ot Paisiya do Rakovski*.

112 Boyan Penev, *Nachalo na bălgarskoto vāzrazhdane*. Pohodna voynishka biblioteka, N 46, 1918. Quoted from the 3rd ed. (Sofia: Hemus, 1946).

113 Hristo Gandev, *Ranno vāzrazhdane, 1700–1860* (Sofia: Kultura, 1939); Gandev, *Faktori na bălgarskoto vāzrazhdane, 1600–1830* (Sofia: Bălgarska kniga, 1943).

114 Especially in the first part of Hristo Gandev’s *Ranno vāzrazhdane* (1839).

115 Nikov, *Vāzrazhdane na bălgarskiya narod*, 26–27. This thesis reappears on many occasions in Hristo Gandev’s works.

116 Vladimir Trendafilov, “Paisiy—ne konstruktor, a konstrukt na Vāzrazhdaneto,” *Kultura* 40 (1996), nos. 51–52.

all, the focus is on the decay of the empire. Let us leave aside the already widely contested thesis about the centuries-long “decline” of the Ottoman Empire. What is relevant here is that concerning the Revival, Bulgarian historiography describes processes and events that took place mostly from the 1820s to the 1870s, but their Ottoman context consists of the “decline,” starting from the end of the sixteenth century.¹¹⁷ It would be misleading to say that historians of the Revival are simply ignoring the Ottoman context. In many cases there is a comparison with the previous centuries of Ottoman rule, with the time before the Revival; thus everything “Ottoman/Turkish” is seen as a heritage from the past. The few Bulgarian historians who use Ottoman studies usually refer to publications on the classical and post-classical period, rather than on the Tanzimat—the time they actually discuss.¹¹⁸

The debate in the Albanian case resulted from similar preoccupations. Communist historiography was highly motivated to prove that the *Rilindja* started not with the League of Prizren in 1878 but much earlier. The main goal was to prove that the national movement was not provoked by external influences, insofar as the League of Prizren was seen as a reaction to foreign territorial claims and was supported by the Ottoman authorities.¹¹⁹ Among Albanian historians during the communist period, there were two competing views. The first held that the national movement started with cultural activities in the 1840s and more precisely with the publication of Naum Vekilharxhi's famous *Primer* (Evetor) in 1844.¹²⁰ The alternative interpretation insisted that the first manifestation of the national movement was actually a number of revolts in the 1830s.¹²¹ As already mentioned, the first edition of the *History of Albania* (1965) indicates the year 1839, but in the second one (2002) the idea prevailed that the *Rilindja* started in the 1830s. In this way it became easier to designate the uprisings against the Tanzimat as the first part of the national movement, instead of disregarding them as a conservative reaction to Europeanizing

117 Genchev, *Bălgarsko vāzrazhdane*. It is symptomatic that the second chapter, “Historical Roots of the Revival Era,” includes the sub-chapter “The Decline of the Ottoman Empire from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries and Bulgarian Society” (ibid., 63 ff.), while the third chapter, “Beginning of the Bulgarian Revival,” starts with “Decay of the Ottoman Empire During the Eighteenth Century. Reform Attempts” (ibid., 68 ff.).

118 Gavrilova, *Koleloto na zhivota*, 417 ff.; Daskalov, *Kak se misli*, 362 ff.

119 Ligor Mile, “Rreth karakterit të kryengritjeve të viteve 1830–1877 në Shqipëri,” in *Konferenca e parë e studimeve*, 574–582; Kristo Frashëri, “Mbi fillimet e lëvizjes kombëtare shqiptare,” ibid., 583–590; as well as comments by Vangjel Meksi and Ziya Shkodra, ibid., 677–680.

120 Kristo Frashëri, “Mbi fillimet”; Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 107.

121 Mile, “Rreth karakterit të kryengritjeve.”

reforms. Thus the *Rilindja* starts immediately after the “Grand Albanian pashaluks,” creating an uninterrupted “Albanian” political history under Ottoman rule. Finally, in this way the Albanian national movement’s lag behind the neighboring nations started to look shorter. Generally speaking, the longer the revival, the easier it is to “discover” internal causes and forces that provoked it.

Ignoring the reforms also means that everything Ottoman/Turkish is seen as “old” and frozen in time, and the Ottoman Empire (often referred to as, “Turkey”) was not only “backward,” but according to the narrative about the Revival, it was completely incapable of change. Bulgarian historiography, otherwise obsessed with political history and state institutions, ignores them concerning the *Vǎzrazhdane*, even when writing institutional history.¹²² Everything “new” and “modern” is associated with the Bulgarian Revival: it is a “transition to Modern Times” and “the beginning of Bulgarian modernity.” Signs of modernization are reported only when they concern the Bulgarians, while those concerning Muslims are silently ignored.

The debates about the beginning of the Revival were particularly misleading in the Bulgarian case, but as a whole the periodization of the *Vǎzrazhdane* reflects the periodization of the Tanzimat. If one leaves aside the Early Revival, the “Revival proper” (*Sǎshtinsko Vǎzrazhdane*) still starts at the same time as the reforms of Mahmud II (in the 1820s rather than the formal announcement of the Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane in 1839), just as it was initially seen by nineteenth-century Bulgarian intellectual and political leaders. The next subperiod, the High/Late Revival (*Zryalo Vǎzrazhdane*), starts in 1856, which coincides with the new wave of changes after the Islahat Fermani—the “second period” of the reforms. Bulgarian historiography mentions this reform edict of 1856 but affirms that the High Revival started “after the Crimean War.” The last statement is correct in itself, but it downplays the active engagement of the Ottoman authorities with the modernization of their own empire and therefore the impact of these policies on the life of the Bulgarian community.

We have seen that for official Albanian historiography, the beginning of the *Rilindja* initially coincided with the proclamation of the Tanzimat (1839) and

122 *Sǎzhdavane i razvitie na moderni institutsii v bǎlgarskoto vǎzrozhdensko obshtestvo*, ed. Plamen Mitev (Sofia: “IF-94”/Sv. Kliment Ohridski, 1996). In some articles (such as those by Plamen Mitev and Nadya Manolova), the role of the state is taken into account, but the introduction (by Konstantin Kosev) is a good example of how one can talk about “modern institutions” without even mentioning the state. Otherwise, when the central focus is on the state, developments before 1878 are simply ignored: e.g., *Probleme der Modernisierung Bulgariens im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Zvetana Todorova (Sofia: Sv. Kliment Ohridski, 1994).

recently changed slightly to the 1830s, but with an explicit statement that “the beginning of the national movement coincides with centralizing reforms.” The next important stages coincide with turning points in Ottoman history such as 1878 and 1908, as well as with the conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and Greece in 1866–1867 and 1897. However, the increasing activity of the Albanian movement after 1897 was not only part of a larger discontent with the Hamidian regime but also resulted from the more active policy of Austria-Hungary and later also Italy in the region, and their ambitions to instrumentalize Albanian nationalism to their own advantage.

In both cases, the processes now seen as (national) Revival developed with the rhythm of Ottoman political history and the reform policies in the Empire. Actually, the contemporaries and the first generations of historians presented the national movement in this framework. Gradually this was downplayed and forgotten, but even in present-day national historiographies, the chronology still shows that the milestones of the revival processes were the major political changes in the Ottoman Empire.

On the other hand, even if the Bulgarian Revival is close to the time of the “revivals” of the peoples in Central Europe, the main events for them (the reforms of the Austrian emperor Joseph II, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the Revolutions of 1848) have nothing to do with the chronology of the Bulgarian Revival. Of course the Ottoman context of the Bulgarian and the Albanian Revival is different. The Bulgarian national movement benefited from the generally more liberal spirit of the Tanzimat; it was a time of opening towards European influences and changes. The Albanian national movement also started during the Tanzimat but later developed (or, one could say, stagnated) under the growingly authoritarian Hamidian regime. It also lived through the turbulence of the 1908 revolution and the first steps of a new centralized regime.

In addition, the regional context is also important. The Austro-Hungarian and Italian interventions that played a key role in the Albanian case are unimaginable in the Bulgarian one, which in turn is greatly indebted to Russia's interests, not only those concerning Orthodox and Slavic peoples but also its strategic interests in the eastern Balkans and the Straits.¹²³ The peripheral position of the Albanian lands in the Ottoman Empire, especially after 1878, made it possible to combine Ottoman suzerainty with the cause of the Albanian movement. However, this potential was not fully used. The growing

123 Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

centralization was counterproductive and alienated many otherwise pro-Ottoman Albanians.

Bulgarian historians have always insisted that the *Văzrazhdane* should not be considered only in the “narrow national framework” but has to be examined “in its natural connection with more general processes and phenomena,” “in the context of the general European history.”¹²⁴ Newer publications also advocate a new approach toward the history of the Revival through the prism of Western European history, using notions such as Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, nationalism, liberalism, constitutionalism and irredentism.¹²⁵ This noble ambition actually leads in too many directions. Historians tend to compare nineteenth-century Bulgarian Revival with everything that happened in Europe between the fourteenth and the nineteenth century, including the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Yet they pay hardly any attention to the reforms in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire itself.

On the other hand, the main figures of the Bulgarian Revival are presented as contemporaries of everything that was happening in Europe in their era, even when they had no real contact with it. This could be justified for the second half of the nineteenth century, when all types of communications with the continent improved significantly. But such parallelism is particularly misleading when applied to the eighteenth century. In this manner the monk Paisiy appears as a “figure of the Enlightenment” (*prosveshtenska figura*) and “contemporary of Herder,” and in some cases even as a “predecessor” of other European thinkers such as Fichte.¹²⁶ It is interesting to note that while in the recent past Paisiy was “contextualized” in the Enlightenment, today he is more often related to the early phases of modern nationalism. But even in the second case, that is related to an overinterpretation of his work, as well as to the misleading replacement of some key words in the modernized editions of his text.¹²⁷ In any case, the ambition to study the Bulgarian Revival in the “larger European context” leads to further undermining of the Ottoman context.

124 Krumka Sharova, “Problemi na bălgarskoto vāzrazhdane,” in *Problemi na bălgarskoto vāzrazhdane* (Sofia: BAN, 1980), 44; Kosev, *Kratka istoriya* (2001), 13.

125 Vera Boneva, “Imenata na Bălgarskoto vāzrazhdane,” in *Istoricheshko bădeshte*, nos. 1–2 (2000): 158–171.

126 Iliya Todev, *Kām drugo minalo ili prenebregvani aspekti na bălgarskoto natsionalno vāzrazhdane* (Sofia: Vigal, 1999), 20.

127 An insightful analysis appears in Hranova, *Istoriografiya i literatura*, vol. 2, 317–347.

In a similar way, Albanian historiography regards the *Rilindja* as a period of extensive Western influences, which are considered something positive.¹²⁸ The Revival is seen as an emancipation from “Oriental,” “Turkish” and even “Asian” domination. Moreover, in publications with conventional views there is no attempt to discuss to what extent the nineteenth-century Ottoman reforms contributed to the modern trends among the Albanians and whether the Ottoman authorities served as a channel for Western influences.

As a whole, the Ottoman reforms in many regards reflected European trends or tried to counterbalance them. What is relevant for our study here is that a large segment of the population in the Balkans had no direct contact with the outside world, and for them the Ottoman state was the main channel for the diffusion of European influences. One can see that even in the Serbian case—although Belgrade is geographically much closer to Vienna than to Istanbul—the initial impetus for the modernization of urban life in the 1830s came from the Ottoman capital.¹²⁹ Just as in the empire itself, the *fez* was accepted as a sign of modernity.

In summary, nineteenth-century Bulgarian history could be better understood in the context of the Tanzimat, and this is valid for the Revival itself, as well as for all other transformations. In the Albanian case obviously the post-Tanzimat and the 1908 context should be considered as well. But the concept of national Revival itself does not depend only on the historical context simply because it is a later construction. In fact, besides the context of the Ottoman nineteenth century, one needs to take into account the conditions in which the respective national historiography developed. The divergent interpretations in Macedonian historiography better exemplify this phenomenon. In this case we need to go into more detail in the debates between individual historians and the interpretations they proposed in order to see how the same national history could be written according to different paradigms—some of them relying on the concept of Revival and others not.

128 Enis Sulstarova, *Arratisje nga Lindja: Orientalizmi shqiptar nga Naimi te Kadareja*, 2nd ed. (Tirana: Dudaj, 2006), 41–66.

129 Milena Vitković-Žikić, “Tanzimat turc et culture urbaine en Serbie du XIX^e siècle,” in *La culture urbaine des Balkans (XV^e–XIX^e siècle)*, ed. N. Tasić (Belgrade: SANU, 1991), 195–204.

The Concept of National Revival in Macedonian Historiography

“What does Macedonian Revival mean?” This question forms the title of a 1983 study by Macedonian historian Blaže Ristovski.¹³⁰ The question is actually not rhetorical, but it might sound somewhat strange: the concept of (national) Revival has a well-established place in Macedonian historical discourse. The vernacular term is *prerodba* and literally means “rebirth.” And, just like in other languages, it is also the local translation for *Renaissance*—a fact that makes possible all sorts of speculation about an alleged and more-than-hypothetical link between the development of nationalism in the nineteenth-century Balkan context and the artistic innovations of fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Western Europe.

Yet the question is not groundless. As a matter of fact, the concept of Revival is well entrenched in popular and political articulations of the past, in commemorations, textbooks and in different forms of conventional historiography. It is a central notion in the Macedonian version of what some French sociologists would call *mémoire historique*:¹³¹ a field with indeterminate boundaries between memory and professional historiography—a narration of the past that is subject to direct political uses. For instance, since 2008, *prerodba* has been a catchy slogan of the right-wing political party VMRO-DPMNE, whose leaders are mocked by their opponents as *prerodbenici* (“revivalists”). Yet at the same time, the concept of Revival has a rather limited presence in serious academic historiography—at least, for instance, compared to the vast bibliography dedicated to the Macedonian revolutionary movement since 1893. In historical studies, *prerodba* is used in parallel with other terms like *budenje*, *razbudevvanje* (“awakening”) or *afirmacija* (national “confirmation”), and it is less common than the term *Vǎzrazhdane* in Bulgarian historiography or *Rilindja* in Albanian historiography. How can one explain this paradox—the remarkable presence of the “Macedonian Revival” in public and political articulations of history and its more limited usage in professional history-writing?

In fact, the concept is a good example of what could be called the “entangled history” of historiography. As Ristovski underlines in his publication, the notion of Macedonian Revival came “from Sofia.” Krste Misirkov (1874–1926), the most important Macedonian national ideologist of the early twentieth

130 Blaže Ristovski, “Što e toa makedonska prerodba? Kon periodizacijata na makedonskiot nacionalen razvitok,” in *Makedonskiot narod i makedonskata nacija*, vol. 1 (Skopje: Misla, 1983), 163–187.

131 Marie-Claire Lavabre, *Le fil rouge. Sociologie de la mémoire communiste* (Paris: Presses de la FNSP, 1994), 21.

century, used this term (in the form *vozroduain'e*) in his political pamphlet *On Macedonian Matters*, published in Sofia in 1903. With this term, Misirkov described in a very general way the local national movement since the nineteenth century and, more concretely, the Macedonian ethno-national emancipation he himself preached. In keeping with the work of Misirkov, the concept of Macedonian (national) Revival went hand in hand—interestingly, but also naturally enough—with the very process of Macedonian ethno-national emancipation. The latter produced, so to say, its own historiographical reflexive projection.

So, not surprisingly, after Misirkov, we find the concept of Macedonian Revival in some (rather journalistic) works written by leftists and communists in the 1930s. During the interwar period, these were the political activists who subscribed to the idea that Macedonian Slavs were ethnically distinct from the neighboring Slavic nations (Bulgarians and Serbs). It was again in Sofia that a Marxist-Leninist-type Macedonian historical narrative was sketched by a circle of journalists associated with the review *Makedonski vesti* (*Macedonian News*, 1935–1936). The concept of national Revival had an important place in this narrative. The first attempt at a thorough reconstruction of a specific Macedonian Revival in the nineteenth century was made by Kosta Veselinov (1908–1942), a Bulgarian communist and activist of the leftist Macedonian milieu,¹³² in a 1939 pamphlet titled *The Revival in Macedonia and the Ilinden Uprising*.¹³³ By the same time, Vasil Ivanovski (1906–1991), another activist of the Bulgarian Communist Party and of the Macedonian “progressive” movement, wrote a manuscript dealing more in detail with the question.¹³⁴ As good Marxists and Leninists, these authors dedicated special attention to the socioeconomic “premises” of the Macedonian national Revival, which they treated in the clichés already used by the Bulgarian Marxists, such as transition from “feudalism” to capitalism through the accumulation of commercial capital. Yet much more challenging for writers like Veselinov and Ivanovski was the task of proving the distinct *national* identity of the “Revival processes” in Macedonia vis-à-vis those in Bulgaria.

¹³² Intriguingly, it is likely that Veselinov was not himself of Macedonian origin: cf. Blaže Ristovski, *Portreti i procesi od makedonskata literaturna i nacionalna istorija*, vol. 3 (Skopje: Kultura, 1990), 458.

¹³³ Kosta Veselinov, *Vǎzrazhdaneto v Makedoniya i Ilindenskoto vǎstanie* (Sofia, 1939).

¹³⁴ *Makedonskiyat vǎpros v mǎnaloto i dnes*, published in Macedonian in Vasil Ivanovski, *Zošto nie Makedoncite sme oddelna nacija*, ed. Ivan Katardžiev (Skopje: Arhiv na Makedonija, 1995), 131–169.

This aspect is hardly surprising. In Bulgarian historical literature and public uses of the past, not only did the narrative of the national Revival already have a quasi-sacred status, but it was also closely related to Macedonia. In the Bulgarian irredentist discourse of the interwar period, some even began to praise Macedonia as “the cradle of the Bulgarian national Revival.” Since then, a number of figures from late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Macedonia have traditionally been mobilized to demonstrate its “Bulgarian belonging.” These figures either called their native language “Bulgarian” (Joakim Krčovski, Kiril Pejčinović) or indeed demonstrated Bulgarian national identity, often blended with their local Macedonian patriotism (Dimitrija/Dimităr and Konstantin Miladinov, Grigor Prličev/Pärlichev, Kuzman Šapkarev/Shapkarev, Rajko Žinzifov/Rayko Zhinzifov and others). Today, clichés like “the cradle of the Bulgarian national Revival,” overused by writers with an agenda, often angry commentators from the former Yugoslav Macedonia. But as a matter of fact, these interpretations were largely created by authors coming from Macedonia who were, by national self-identification, Bulgarians.

For instance, Simeon Radev (1879–1967), a Bulgarian diplomat and journalist-historian born in Resen (today in the Republic of Macedonia), published in 1918 the book *La Macédoine et la Renaissance (sic!) bulgare au XIX^e siècle*.¹³⁵ There he presented his native region as the motherland of Bulgarian patriotism. The year and the language of publication attest to its propagandist character (directed in particular against the “Serbian lies” concerning the ethnic identity of the Macedonian Slavs). If not abroad, then certainly in Bulgaria, such publications firmly established the idea of Macedonia as the first battleground of Bulgarian national struggles in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century. It is worth noting that the creation of this image was greatly facilitated by a suggestion made by another Macedonian author. In April 1912, on the pages of a Sofia-based journal, the former Bulgarian metropolitan bishop of Skopje, Teodosiy/Teodosija Gologanov (1846–1926), announced that Paisiy Hilendarski (1722–1773), already glorified as inaugurator of the era of the Bulgarian Revival, most likely originated from Macedonia (from Bansko, today in Bulgaria). This “sensation” ultimately sealed the image of “Macedonia—cradle of Bulgarian nationalism.”

The first Macedonian nationalist activists had to fight this image somehow. At the same time, the fact that they nevertheless stuck to the idea of “national Revival,” largely used in the Bulgarian articulations of the past, shows to what

135 Siméon Radeff, *La Macédoine et la Renaissance bulgare au XIX^e siècle* (Sofia: Société des savants, gens de lettres et artistes bulgares, 1918). The book was published in Bulgarian in 1927.

extent they were educated and socialized in a Bulgarian context, vastly different in this regard from the Greek and Serbian one. The result was somewhat uncomfortable. Veselinov, Ivanovski and the other communist codifiers of the Macedonian historical narrative needed to demonstrate a separate Macedonian national Revival within the deeply inculcated narrative of “the Bulgarian national Revival in Macedonia,” entrenched, it seems, in their perceptions as well. Ivanovski even had to concede that the former was “entangled” (*prepleteno*) with the latter.

In the interpretation put forth by the communist nationalists from Macedonia, the Revival had mostly a cultural character, not a revolutionary one. This corresponded to its Bulgarian treatment from the interwar period: Bulgarian historiography still had not invented the holy trinity of the “Revival processes” codified during the communist period (cultural movement and struggle for the development of education in Bulgarian; struggle for an autocephalous Church directed against the Constantinople Patriarchate; revolutionary movement aiming to liberate Bulgaria from Ottoman domination) and the Revival was interpreted mostly in cultural and educational terms. At the same time, the creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870, a result of the Church struggle, could not be seen as positive from the Macedonian (ethno-national) point of view: to this day, Macedonian historiography regularly blames the Exarchate for the “Bulgarization” of many Macedonians in the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet here as well, Ivanovski reproduced a Bulgarian historiographic reflex by writing approvingly of Macedonians’ struggle against the “Phanariots,” that is, against the clergy of the Constantinople Patriarchate and its local partisans. From Ivanovski on, many leaders of this movement, some of whom became Bulgarian bishops (Parteniy/Partenija Zografski, Natanail Ohridski), achieved, in the Macedonian narrative, the status of patriotic Macedonians.

Concerning the Macedonian revolutionary struggle, it was clearly not subsumed to the idea of Macedonian national Revival. The main historical actor of this struggle—the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization—was created only in 1893, while its peak came in 1903, with the Ilinden Uprising. Veselinov, Ivanovski and the other early codifiers of the Macedonian narrative obviously perceived the revolutionary movement as coming “after” the era of Revival, as they unconsciously tended to synchronize it with the Bulgarian Revival: the latter by definition finished in 1878, with the creation of a Bulgarian state. As we will see, later representatives of Macedonian historiography will seek to overcome this automatic Bulgarian reaction in the periodization of the Revival. Still, leftist and communist Macedonian writers like Mihail Smatrakalev (1910–1998), a member of the same circle as Veselinov

and Ivanovski, largely used the methods of historical stylization of Bulgarian revolutionary heroes (like Vasil Levski) in their glorification of Macedonian revolutionaries such as Goce Delčev.¹³⁶

A salient characteristic of these early Macedonian interpretations of the Revival is the aforementioned postulate of the “entanglement” of Macedonian and Bulgarian Revival. Ivanovski used all possible rhetorical tricks of Marxism-Leninism in order to demonstrate that even if “Macedonian people’s enlighteners and revivalists” considered themselves, “in a subjective way,” Bulgarians, “objectively, in front of History, their activity remained an agenda of a distinct Macedonian national Revival.”¹³⁷ In quite a Stalinist fashion, Ivanovski and Smatrakalev affirmed that the Macedonian Revival had Bulgarian “external forms” but Macedonian “content.”¹³⁸ A similar assessment was suggested by another member of their circle, Kiril Nikolov (1911–1971).¹³⁹ However, these authors knew and named some of their predecessors—like the aforementioned Krste Misirkov and Teodosija Gologanov¹⁴⁰—who also developed Macedonian “external forms” of nationalism. The activity of these figures would later be studied by professional Macedonian historians.

The historical interpretations put forth by the communist activists indicated thus far were anything but inconsequential for the construction of the contemporary Macedonian national narrative. In 1944–1945 Kosta Veselinov’s pamphlet became the first history textbook used in Macedonian schools. Vasil Ivanovski became the first editor-in-chief of the first Macedonian daily newspaper *Nova Makedonija*. Other members of their circle—like Kiril Nikolov or Angel Dinev (1891–1952), editor of the aforementioned review *Makedonski vesti* and a prolific author dealing with a wide variety of historical questions (such as the medieval Macedonian Slavs and the Macedonian revolutionary

136 Here the parallelism “Levski/Delčev” is confirmed by direct comparisons: Mihail Smatrakalev, *Na makedonski temi*, ed. Vasil Tocinovski (Skopje: Arhiv na Makedonija, 1999), 192–196.

137 Ivanovski, *Zošto nie Makedoncite*, 146.

138 Smatrakalev, *Na makedonski temi*, 121–144.

139 See Kiril Nikolov, *Za makedonskata nacija* (Skopje, 1946).

140 Although he was named Bulgarian metropolitan bishop in Skopje, in 1890–1892 Gologanov tried to establish a separate Macedonian Church, an activity that resulted in his dismissal and temporary marginalization. Thus after his short period as an early Macedonian national ideologist, Gologanov again became a Bulgarian bishop, as well as a writer and a member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. As we have seen, he contributed significantly to the construction of the image of Macedonia as “cradle of the Bulgarian Revival” through his “data” about Paisiy Hilendarski’s birthplace.

movement since the late Ottoman period)—also established themselves in the newly proclaimed Yugoslav Macedonia. As a result, the Macedonian historical canon inherited a number of concepts and schemes through which these authors perceived history: namely, schemes derived from their Bulgarian education.

Initially, this influence looked quite direct. It was visible in the first Yugoslav edition (1946) of Krste Misirkov's Macedonian nationalist manifesto—more concretely, in the introduction to it written by Dare Džambaz (1911–1981), one of the participants in the first commission charged with the codification of the Macedonian alphabet. He referred specifically to the period of the Macedonian national Revival (which he designated with the term *vozroduenje*), and the interpretation he suggested is somewhat paradoxical. According to Džambaz, throughout the nineteenth century—at least until the creation of a Bulgarian state in 1878—the “Macedonian national question” was unified (*zaedničko*) with the Bulgarian; moreover, the latter was so dominant that Macedonians bore a “Bulgarian name.”¹⁴¹ Such statements clearly did not contribute much to the construction of a separate Macedonian historical narrative, and soon they became impossible: the Tito-Stalin split in 1948 placed Bulgaria and Yugoslavia on opposing sides of an extremely aggressive propaganda war. In Yugoslav Macedonia, it brought about a much less compromising interpretation of history—and in particular of the Revival period—which was launched by a young philologist who already seemed to be the main codifier of the Macedonian standard language: Blaže Koneski (1921–1993).

In a 1949 book, Koneski formulated the main lines of interpretation of the Macedonian national Revival, which have remained almost unaltered to the present day.¹⁴² First of all, Koneski coined the definitive Macedonian term for “Revival”: *prerodba*. It replaced the previous versions (*vozroduenje*, *vozagjanje*, etc.), which sounded closer to the Bulgarian term *Vъзраждане*: Bulgarian was actually the language used, at least until their arrival in Skopje, by activists like Ivanovski, Nikolov and Dinev.¹⁴³ Like them, Koneski suggested a socioeconomic analysis of the processes of national emancipation in late Ottoman Macedonia shaped by the then-obligatory Marxist-Leninist approach. The timeframe of the Revival accepted by Koneski is also quite similar: the Macedonian Revival begins by the end of the eighteenth century (like the Bulgarian Revival) and

141 Krste Misirkov, *Za makedonckite raboti* (Skopje, 1946), ix.

142 *Makedonskite učebnici od XIX vek. Eden prilog kon makedonskata prerodba*. The work is better known under the title of its second edition: Blaže Koneski, *Kon makedonskata prerodba. Makedonskite učebnici od XIX vek* (Skopje: INI, 1959).

143 Koneski's term is visibly closer to the Serbian/Croatian equivalent: *preporod*.

finishes at some point in the 1870s or the 1880s. Koneski did not explicitly state when the period ended, but the implied endpoint seems strikingly close to the traditional end of the Bulgarian Revival (1878). However, the young scholar constructed a much more “de-Bulgarianized” interpretation of the era.

His work focuses on the textbooks in vernacular Slavic Macedonian dialects or supra-dialectal forms and, in general, on the attempts of literary usage of Macedonian made by nineteenth-century authors like Partenija Zografski, Kuzman Šapkarev and Dimitar Makedonski. Koneski emphasized the “language conflicts” from the 1850s to the 1870s between (in his terminology) “Bulgarian” and “Macedonian” enlighteners concerning the principles of linguistic standardization. He emphasized the reluctance of the latter to give up their native Macedonian dialects. Referring to Partenija Zografski’s expression “common language,”¹⁴⁴ Koneski stated that Macedonian intellectuals from the nineteenth century insisted on a Bulgaro-Macedonian linguistic “compromise,” similar to the Serbo-Croatian compromise in 1850. Thus he rejected the idea that Macedonians labeled the language they spoke “Bulgarian.” The thesis of the “common Bulgaro-Macedonian language,” allegedly a short-lived project from the mid-nineteenth century, is still unshakable in Macedonian historiography.

In fact, Koneski attacked in many ways the Bulgarian context in which the nineteenth-century history of Macedonia was previously presented. For instance, he emphasized the Serbian influences in Macedonia during the first half of the nineteenth century; he accused Russia of spreading Bulgarian influence (one can sense in this point the climate of the Cominform split); and he directly criticized the interpretations of Bulgarian historians. To demonstrate the development of Macedonian national consciousness, Koneski pointed to an 1871 article by none other than the leading Bulgarian Revival activist and writer Petko Slaveykov. In this article, Slaveykov referred to some local Macedonian patriots whom he called “Macedonists” (*makedonisti*), unfortunately without citing their names. These allegedly considered themselves Macedonians in an ethnic sense—both as “pure Slavs” and as descendants of the ancient Macedonians—and distinguished themselves from the “Tatar Bulgarians.”¹⁴⁵ After Koneski’s publication, Slaveykov’s article became a compulsory and incessant reference in Macedonian historiography—even if it is still unclear whom the Bulgarian writer had in mind. There was nevertheless such a kind of “Macedonist,” and Koneski readily added his name to the pantheon of the revivalists from Macedonia previously codified by Bulgarian

144 Used in the article “Misli za bolgarskiot jazik,” *Bălgarski knizhitsi* 1, 1858.

145 Petko Slaveykov, “Za makedonskiyt vāpros,” *Makedoniya*, January 18, 1871.

historiography. This was Gjorgji(ja) Pulevski (1817–1893), the first known author of works asserting the existence of a distinct Macedonian Slavic history and identity.¹⁴⁶ In this way, instead of the “entanglement” of Bulgarian and Macedonian “forms” and “contents” imagined by his predecessors, Koneski even tried to demonstrate the beginning of a local struggle against “Bulgarian propaganda” in Macedonia.

However, Koneski’s effort to show the rise of a clear Macedonian national consciousness in the nineteenth century is undermined by his passing insistence on the national “underdevelopment” of Macedonians compared to their neighbors (Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians) during the same period. He referred to Macedonians as an “undeveloped” people who often fell victim to the nationalist propaganda of their neighbors. Koneski even took issue with the popular metaphor of the “awakening” of a “sleeping” national spirit and referred to data showing to what extent nineteenth-century Macedonian Slavs did not have a clear national identity. This fact may suggest quite an up-to-date approach to the processes of national construction. Furthermore, this approach clearly contradicts the very idea of *Revival*, which is nevertheless present throughout Koneski’s book—even in the title. This paradox could be resolved somewhat if one takes into account the strategic character of Koneski’s approach: obviously, his first task was to discount any idea that a Bulgarian intelligentsia existed in nineteenth-century Macedonia. Advancing the thesis that national consciousness in nineteenth-century “revivalist” Macedonia was not developed helped demonstrate that Bulgarian consciousness in the region was not developed either.

The points suggested by Blaže Koneski appear to be fundamental to the Macedonian historical interpretation of the *prerodba*: the young linguist managed to formulate all aspects of its thematic repertoire. In subsequent historical publications, “Revival” remained a term applied strictly to the cultural and educational sphere and, more specifically, to the writing in vernacular Macedonian during the nineteenth century. The thesis about the “Bulgaro-Macedonian linguistic compromise” that allegedly culminated in a struggle against Bulgarian influence, the article of Slaveykov, the emphasis on Pulevski, and finally, the contradictory reference to the “a-national” character of nineteenth-century Macedonians: these points are constantly repeated in the Macedonian studies on the Revival period. Yet the very term “revival” (*prerodba*) was not necessarily so common in academic works. For instance,

146 Some of his works were published in Belgrade and in Sofia, the first one being *Rečnik od četiri jezika* (Belgrade, 1873).

it is rare in the voluminous works of the literary historian Haralampie Polenakovikj (1909–1984).¹⁴⁷

In fact, his case shows to what extent the academic elite of the Yugoslav republic of Macedonia had inherited scholarly paradigms that came from different national contexts and which often contradicted each other. Prior to the establishment of the Macedonian republic, Haralampie Polenakovikj (or Haralampije Polenaković) belonged to the (pro-)Serbian (“Southern Serbian”) intelligentsia of the region around the Vardar River. In the academic context of royal Yugoslavia, scholars like Polenaković tried to construct an interpretation of the development of a “Slavic” culture in nineteenth-century Macedonia that was able to suppress the Bulgarian version. That is how a personality such as Gjorgji Pulevski was discovered.¹⁴⁸ In his later “Macedonian period,” Polenakovikj still emphasized the links of the local nineteenth-century writers with Serbian and Croatian intellectuals and, in this manner, he tended to present the former in a “Yugoslav” context. In this enterprise he instead used terms like *budenje* (“awakening”). In his publications after 1959, Blaže Koneski also tended to avoid the term *prerodba* and to replace it with *razdviživanje* (stirring, movement), and so forth.¹⁴⁹ The academic *History of the Macedonian People*, edited in 1969 by the Institute for National History in Skopje, does not contain a big section titled *Revival (Era)*—like every academic presentation of Bulgarian history does.¹⁵⁰

Undoubtedly, this fact can be explained by the Yugoslav context in which the Macedonian historians were educated and socialized. It should be underlined once again that in the historiographies of Croatia and Slovenia—and to some extent of Bosnia—there is a concept of Revival (*preporod*), although its semantic field and popular relevance are certainly more limited than the corresponding concepts in Bulgaria or Albania. More importantly, in Serbian historiography there is no specific period or movement known as “Revival.”

147 See, in particular, the third, fourth and fifth volumes of his selected works: *Izbrani dela*, vol. 3: *Nikulcite na novata makedonska kniževnost*, vol. 4: *Vo ekot na narodnoto budenje*, vol. 5: *Studii za Miladinovci* (Skopje: Makedonska kniga, 1989).

148 Haralampije Polenaković, “Mijački leksikograf Đorđe M. Puljevski,” *Glas Juga*, Božić (1941): 30–32.

149 Noted by Ristovski, “Što e toa makedonska prerodba?” 166. See, for instance, Blaže Koneski, *Makedonskiot XIX vek. Jazični i kniževno-istoriski prilozi* (Skopje: Kultura, 1986).

150 The concept figures only in the title of a very short chapter in the second volume: *Početoci na prerodbata* (“Beginning of the Revival”), in *Istorija na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 2 (Skopje: NIP Nova Makedonija, 1969), 35–40. It must also be noted that in Macedonian the term *prerodba* is written with a lowercase initial letter, while at present (starting from the communist period) in Bulgarian *Vъзраждане* is always capitalized.

The Yugoslav historiographic context likely tended to put into question the value of such a concept for the Macedonian narrative. There was perhaps also another problem: paradoxically, the patriotic value of many of the leading figures of the Macedonian Revival, of the “revivalists” (*prerodbenici*), was also problematic. In fact, their own writings often bluntly contradict the idea that they were leading a *Macedonian* ethno-national movement.¹⁵¹

Since the early 1960s, Macedonian and Bulgarian historiography were in a state of undeclared war, and the Bulgarian researchers were constantly attacking their Macedonian colleagues with extracts from writings of Macedonian revivalists showing their self-identification as Bulgarians.¹⁵² In fact, the Macedonian “Revival period” became the favorite weapon of Bulgarian polemicists trying to demonstrate the “groundless” and “absurd” character of the Macedonian historical narrative. As a result, Macedonian authors also began questioning the usefulness of a concept inherited “from Sofia” as well as the established pantheon of figures who went along with it.

In its presentation of the processes of national formation in the nineteenth century, the academic *History of the Macedonian People* from 1969 used the same Marxist-Leninist socioeconomic approach as the authors from the inter-war period. It largely misinterpreted the specificities of the Ottoman society and economy (when speaking of “feudalism” or of the formation of a distinct Macedonian “national market,” etc.), but still, it referred to the Ottoman reforms in the nineteenth century and their importance for the development of the national movement in Macedonia as well. Soon these references disappeared. Just like in Bulgaria, the specialists in Ottoman studies were supposed to research “only” the Ottoman context, while the cultural movement of the

151 To give just one example, the “Macedonian revivalist” Rajko Žinzifov (1839–1877) has left to us the following declaration: “By Bulgarian language we mean the language that is spoken throughout all of Macedonia, Thrace and Bulgaria, and whose dialects are more or less [*malu mnogo*] diverse. But we, like every Bulgarian who is not spiritually shortsighted, by no means can say that the word *ràka* [“hand”] or *vòda* [“water”] is a Macedonian or Thracian word, while [the forms] *rǎkà* and *vodà* are Bulgarian, as there are no Macedonians and no Thracians as distinct peoples [*narodi*], but only Slav-Bulgarians [*Slavyane-Bǎlgare*] who inhabit the regions mentioned . . . one Bulgarian people and one Bulgarian language . . .” See *Bǎlgarski vǎzrozhdenski knizhovnitsi ot Makedoniya. Izbrani stranitsi* (Sofia: BAN, 1983), 293.

152 On the Bulgarian-Macedonian historiographical wars and their political context: Stefan Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967–1982* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1983), and Tchavdar Marinov, *La Question macédonienne de 1944 à nos jours. Communisme et nationalisme dans les Balkans* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2010).

prerodba was imagined as a national phenomenon completely detached from this context. It was a speciality of the historians dealing with national history. The exclusively cultural and educational character of the Macedonian concept of Revival also tended to eliminate any larger political or socioeconomic context. But it also eliminated any larger cultural context: facing the Bulgarian attacks, the Macedonian scholars had to substantiate the purely “Macedonian character” of the Macedonian Revival—or else rethink and perhaps discard a large part of it.

Such an attempt was made by the journalist-historian Dragan Taškovski (1917–1980), whose works *The Birth of the Macedonian Nation* (1967) and *On the Ethnogenesis of the Macedonian People* (1974) enjoyed great popularity. Taškovski’s reading of Macedonian history is extremely nationalist and sharply directed against the competitive Bulgarian reading. Instead of dealing with social and economic matters, Taškovski seems much more concerned with the questions of ethnic (treated almost as racial) distinctiveness between Macedonians and Bulgarians since the Middle Ages. In his reconstruction of Macedonians’ long ethno-national continuity, the Revival period had an ambiguous status. It is both the moment of the Macedonian nation’s “birth” and an era in which Macedonians tended to abandon their people’s self-designation as Greek in favor of some “nebulous” Slavic identity.¹⁵³ Taškovski even openly accused a series of Macedonian revivalists (Paisiy Hilendarski, Joakim Krčovski, Kiril Pejčinović, Teodosij Sinaitski and Natanail Ohridski) of lacking patriotism. He also attacked Rajko Žinzifov, who dared to deny the existence of Macedonian identity.¹⁵⁴ The author appealed to his colleagues to discover the “real” Macedonian patriots—those anonymous “Macedonists” from Petko Slaveykov’s 1871 article—instead of glorifying figures (such as the Miladinov brothers or Žinzifov) who were promoted (“served”) by Bulgarian historiography.¹⁵⁵

Dragan Taškovski’s diatribe against the most popular personalities of the nineteenth-century cultural movement was certainly doomed to failure. Macedonian schools were given, and still bear, names like “Rajko Žinzifov” or “Brothers Miladinov.” A prestigious international poetry festival is held annually in the birthplace of the latter, in the town of Struga. In neighboring Ohrid another poetry prize called “Grigor Prličev” is awarded. Codified by Bulgarian historiography and “transferred” to Macedonian historiography

153 Dragan Taškovski, *Ragjanjeto na makedonskata nacija* (Skopje: NIP Nova Makedonija, 1967), 120.

154 Taškovski, *Ragjanjeto na makedonskata nacija*, 180.

155 *Ibid.*, 175.

through the writings of Bulgarian-educated Macedonian communists, the revivalists' pantheon is fundamental to contemporary Macedonian identity. The names of these revivalists seemed even better known than those of early Macedonian national ideologists—like Dimitrija Čupovski (1878–1940)—whose activity was researched by serious academic historiography.¹⁵⁶ With regard to the “Revival,” the Macedonian *mémoire historique* and Macedonian historiography were caught in a peculiar disjunction. Although the concept of Revival and the figures associated with it did not necessarily correspond to the needs of Macedonian historical scholarship, the latter was not able to reject such an important representation of the past. The solution was to rearrange it, both thematically and chronologically, so that its excessively “Bulgarian” framework disappeared.

Since the 1980s a series of such attempts have been made by the academic Blaže Ristovski.¹⁵⁷ It is perhaps not irrelevant that a specialist dealing with the *prerodba* like him “came” to Macedonian historical research from another disciplinary field (literature and folklore). Ristovski did not introduce fundamental changes into the “content” of the period already codified by Koneski. In his works, *prerodba* still denotes a cultural and educational movement centered on the usage of vernacular Macedonian in literature, the “linguistic conflicts” between “Macedonian” and “Bulgarian” intellectuals, the first data about a distinct Macedonian nationalism like Slaveykov's 1871 article, and so on.

Yet Ristovski is the first researcher to question the origin of the concept of Macedonian national Revival. He comes across the following problem: if Macedonians did not have statehood traditions since the medieval period—more specifically, traditions of statehood designated as Macedonian (*svoimen-ski državno-pravni tradicii*)¹⁵⁸—then what was actually being “revived” in the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth century? Ristovski indicated that the very presence of this concept was due to the “belated” confirmation of Macedonian national consciousness (*podocnešna nacionalna afirmacija*): Macedonians seem forced to borrow “foreign” notions even in order to describe their own history. The researcher stated that the concept of Revival was inherited from Bulgarian historiography and added that it “is not the most adequate to our

156 At least if we trust Ristovski, who deplores this neglect: Blaže Ristovski, *Stoletija na makedonskata svest* (Skopje: Kultura, 2001), 43.

157 The most recent one was his book *Makedonskiot prerodbenski XIX vek. Prilozi za makedonskata literaturno-kulturna istorija*, vol. 1 (Skopje: Izdavački centar Tri, 2011).

158 Ristovski is among the (not so many) Macedonian researchers who try to explain why the medieval “State of Samuil” (997–1018), considered the first Macedonian Slavic state, is referred to in the sources as “Bulgarian.”

[historical] contents [context] and it is not the one corresponding best to our needs.”¹⁵⁹ However, he did not seem ready to abandon such a popular notion.

As a solution, Ristovski suggested a new periodization of the *prerodba* in which the end of the period is extended towards the present day. According to him, one can speak of three periods of the Revival: an “educational-cultural and spiritual movement (*razdviživanje*)” or “cultural Revival” (1814–1870), the “national awakening of the Macedonian people, or national Revival” (1870–1903), and the “political maturation of the Macedonian people, or political Revival” (1903–1944).¹⁶⁰ These periods are themselves divided into sub-periods. Even if one can also find a certain Bulgarian influence in this triple periodization of the “Revival,” it certainly drifts away from the Bulgarian concept. If the end of the “cultural Revival” is not far from the year that marks the end of the Bulgarian Revival and the beginning of modern Bulgarian statehood (1878), the end of the entire process is moved forward in a way that completely changes the overall thinking of the period. From a Bulgarian point of view, it would be difficult to imagine the decades after 1878 as part of the Revival: there is already a Bulgarian state, and it would be unthinkable to interpret the Balkan Wars, World War I and so on as expressions of “Revival.”¹⁶¹ At the same time, this modification makes it possible to include in the Macedonian pantheon of revivalists not only those who are traditionally considered in Bulgaria to be Bulgarian revivalists (the only exception being Gjorgji Pulevski) but also many other figures, like Krste Misirkov and Dimitrija Čupovski, who have formulated the principles of contemporary Macedonian nationalism.

In a more recent publication, Ristovski deplored the fact that “Macedonian scholarship not only has not specified the [meaning of the] concept of *Revival* in Macedonian historical conditions, but it has not even [clearly] marked either the beginning or the end of *the Revival period*.”¹⁶² As for the latter, it is again moved forward to 1944 and the creation of the Yugoslav Macedonian republic. More intriguingly, the beginning is moved back to the activity of the South Slavic engraver and writer Hristofor Žefarović (who died in 1753) and to Paisiy Hilendarski, the canonized initiator of the Bulgarian Revival and a highly nationalistic historical reference in the Bulgarian public and political sphere. In fact, academic Macedonian historiography has never included Paisiy in the list of Macedonian revivalists: his presence in Taškovski’s list is only a

159 Ristovski, “Što e toa makedonska prerodba?” 173.

160 Ibid., 174.

161 In fact, academic publications insist that the Revival continued in territories under Ottoman rule until 1912, but this is hardly known outside academic circles.

162 Blaže Ristovski, *Soznajbi za jazikot, literaturata i nacijata* (Skopje: MANU, 2001), 113.

confirmation of the publication's "dilettantish" character. Ristovski likewise paid special attention to the activity of Neofit Rilski (1793–1881), the author of the first Bulgarian grammar book (*Bolgarska grammatika*, 1835), also born in Macedonia (Bansko). Thus Ristovski contributed to the re-examination of the established Macedonian historical narrative. This trend, which started when the Republic of Macedonia gained independence (1991), and became more visible after 1999, "converted" into Macedonian patriots many historical personalities who were previously regarded as (pro-)Bulgarian nationalists.¹⁶³

However, Ristovski is also not consistent in the usage of the concept of Revival. In another of his recent publications, he recommended the term "awakening" (*budenje*) as more "appropriate."¹⁶⁴ Nor do we find the term *prerodba* in the new academic *History of the Macedonian People* (2003), which was supposed to replace the 1969 edition, today considered obsolete. The issue is with the third volume, dedicated to the "long nineteenth century"—until the period of the Balkan Wars (1912–1913). Terms and expressions like "Revival," "Revival process/movement" and "revivalists" are sporadically used.¹⁶⁵ However, unlike in the 1969 edition, not even a single section title contains the term *prerodba*. The nineteenth-century cultural movement is itself described rather tersely.

Nowadays, the lack of a systematic approach to the notion of Revival and the fluid academic treatment of its periodization, emblematic personalities, and so on still allows some leading historians to express their reservations concerning the usefulness and the "patriotic merit" of such a concept. For instance, the academician Ivan Katardžiev stated that the Revival was a time of only "partial confirmation" (*delumna afirmacija*) of Macedonians, a period with an "indefinite" Macedonian ethno-national "profile" (*ne-dokraj profilirana makedonska etnonacionalna fizionomija*).¹⁶⁶ In the same 2003 publication, Katardžiev suggested that it was the interwar period (1920s–1930s), not the nineteenth century, that represented the "definitive" Macedonian Revival. Obviously, the "entanglement" of the "Macedonian Revival" with the "Bulgarian Revival," indicated by the authors who conceived the former, is still able to compromise it in one way or another. The result is a somewhat

163 This topic is discussed in detail in Christian Voss, "Sprach- und Geschichtsrevision in Makedonien. Zur Dekonstruktion von Blaže Koneski," *Osteuropa* 51 (2001): 953–967; Tchavdar Marinov, "Anticommunist, but Macedonian: Politics of Memory in the Republic of Macedonia," *Tokovi istorije* 1–2 (2009): 65–83.

164 Ristovski, *Stoletija na makedonskata svest*, 51.

165 *Istorija na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 3 (Skopje: INI, 2003), 23, 28, 53, 138, 490, 509.

166 Ivan Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini po Ilindenskoto vostanie* (Skopje: Kultura, 2003), 37–39.

paradoxical thesis about the not “developed” enough, “belated,” “unclear” in ethno-national identity, not “revived” enough and finally not “Macedonian” enough Revival of Macedonians in the nineteenth century. This thesis is present from Koneski to Katardžiev, through Taškovski and Ristovski. In general, *prerodba* is supposed to mean the birth of modern nationalism in the Macedonian context, but it often fails to comply with the criteria for that.

The story of the Macedonian historiographic concept of national Revival actually shows that, in some cases, national narrative in its public form is constructed in a way that does not necessarily correspond to the logic of academic national historiography. In these cases, both popular representations of the past and their historiographical “processing” have inherited paradigms, terms and narratives from other national contexts. Whatever importance they have in the construction and maintenance of national identity, these can actually contradict the needs of the scholarly discipline. Yet the fact that they are well entrenched in the popular *mémoire historique* makes them relatively untouchable, and historical works feel obliged to take them into account. Even though *prerodba* is abandoned or contested by leading Macedonian historians, the public and political spheres continue to “revive” this concept and bring it back in historical discourse.

• • •

In some Balkan historiographies the nineteenth-century cliché of “revival” was gradually adopted as the name of an era with clearly defined time limits and that had a great impact on history-writing in the Bulgarian and in the Albanian case. In traditionalist publications the Revival is clearly related to an idealization and glorification of the national past. In this regard it plays the role of a grand narrative that is so important for any nationalist agenda. In more sophisticated academic studies, the concept of (national) Revival serves the ambitions to place the national history in a European context and discuss parallels with major trends and eras in the early modern and modern history of the continent. Past searches for an equivalent went as far back as the European Renaissance of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries. At present, academic studies rightly try to understand the respective (national) Revival in the context of the birth of modern nationalism and look for possible parallels with national movements elsewhere in Europe.

In the case of the small nations in multiethnic empires, these national movements are often called “revivals,” which invites further comparisons. The problem is that these national movements were deeply influenced by the respective imperial context, but national historiographies often tend to undermine the

impact of the “alien” state in a process that is seen as something extremely positive. This undermining of the imperial context is particularly visible in Balkan historiographies that regard the Ottoman Empire as an “Asiatic” superstructure, responsible mostly for their backwardness vis-à-vis Western and Central Europe. The greatest challenge comes from the fact that the (national) Revival developed during an era of reform in the Ottoman Empire and in fact was deeply influenced by this context.

Although the idea of “revival,” like “awakening,” “rebirth” and many others, goes back to nineteenth-century Romantic nationalism, the historiographical concept of (national) Revival is a later construction. The present-day historical discourse on the *Vǎzrazhdane* and the *Rilindja* is the product of twentieth-century academic research, and the instrumentalization of certain clichés like “revival” itself is of limited importance. On the other hand, as we have seen from the Macedonian case, avoiding the concept of Revival does not mean automatically overcoming the problems related to the glorification of the national past.

The paradigm of the Revival was questioned in both Bulgarian and Albanian historiography, but it remains powerful for two reasons. First, as in the case of the Macedonian *prerodba*, the national revival is too precious to the wider public. Second, the institutional framework in the academic institutions helps to reify the concept. That means that new generations of scholars are still trained according to the established paradigm and schoolbooks continue to reproduce the master narrative about the national revival. In turn, that contributes to the continuing popularization of the *Vǎzrazhdane/Rilindja* discourse among younger generations.

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